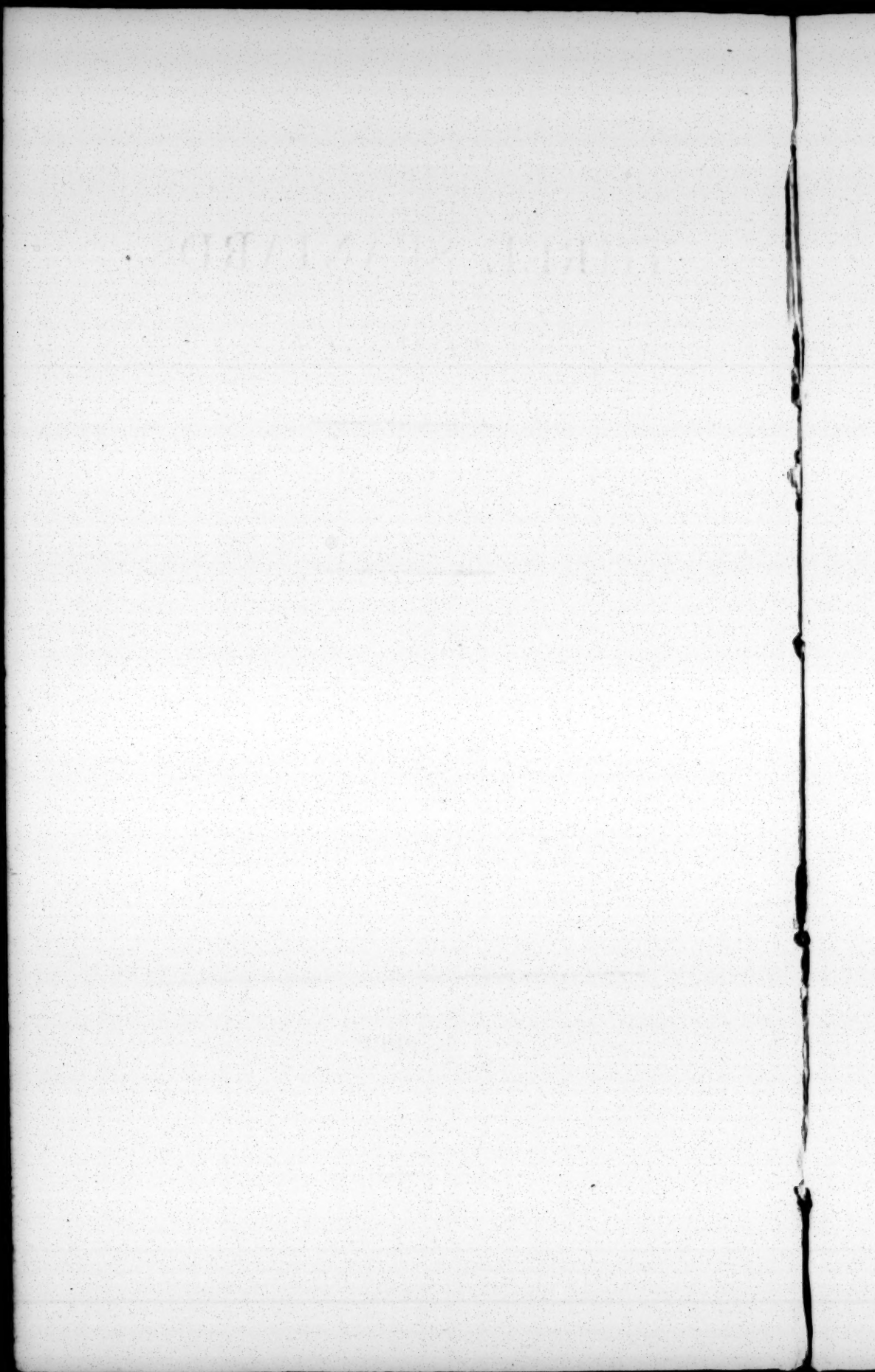

THE THREE SPANIARDS.

VOL. II



THE
THREE SPANIARDS,
A ROMANCE.

BY GEORGE WALKER,
AUTHOR OF THE VAGABOND, &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

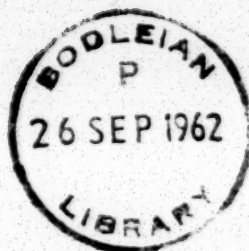
..... "Art thou any thing?
Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
That mak'st my blood cold, and my hair to stand?
Speak to me, what art thou?"

JULIUS CÆSAR.

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THE
THREE SPANIARDS.

CHAP. I.

I GAVE myself up, as usual, to variety of reflection, harassing my mind with conjectures which led to no positive conclusion. My spirits seemed strangely depressed, which I imputed to the surprise of so singular an incident, and I endeavoured to rally my own weakness.

For three hours we continued to ride with speed. The night was fine and clear. I endeavoured to trace the stars as we whirled along, but my mind admitted of no outward amusement, and I relapsed again into thoughtfulness.

VOL. II.

B

Some

Some time after I was roused by Raolo, who informed me that two men on horseback were advancing, whom it might be as well to prepare for.

"We need not fear a number inferior to our own," replied I, "and probably not so well armed. Your pistols are ready, I suppose."

"Yes, yes," answered he, "we shall shew them sport; I was only afraid your Excellenza might have been sleeping."

"Did you ever know me sleep on my post?"—"No, Senor, but you might have been sleeping to refresh before the hour of battle."

"Very well, Raolo," replied I laughing, "'tis a pity you were not born a courtier; keep a good look-out, and beware of surprise."

It was not long before I heard the clattering of horses, and two men of very suspicious appearance rode by us. They eyed us with a scrutinising look, but from some motive rode on without attacking us.

Possibly,

Possibly, thought I, they propose waiting for us in the narrow part of the road; or in some gloomy hollow, where we shall not have the warning of their horses' feet.

Raolo came up to the chaise door, and desired I would command the driver to halt a few minutes. "I do not like that fellow," said he; "I thought I observed some intelligent signs pass between him and those ill-looking fellows. Will your Excellenza question him?"

"Do you think he will confess any thing then? Depend upon it, he would not criminate himself."

"Your Excellenza knows best," replied Raolo. "I thought it my duty to tell my suspicions—Have you got your powder flask? for the hard riding, or else my carrying one of the pistols in my hand, has dashed out the priming."

"That must have been very careless," replied I: "ask the Post-boy if he has got a flask, I cannot find mine." Raolo then inquired of the driver, who answered very

fulkily that he never carried any such combustible stuff about him.

"Never mind," said I, "take half the priming from the other pistol." Raolo took it from the holster—"By the Holy Pope!" exclaimed he, "this is in the same case—"

"Impossible!" cried I, starting at a thought which flashed across me; "you say you loaded the pistols before we set out?"

"Yes, I am certain of that," replied he; "I put a brace of bullets into each, and then laid them down in the kitchen while I just stepped into the yard to look at the horse I was to hire; and when I returned, there they lay."

"Ah!" exclaimed I, "could any thing be more thoughtless: somebody has been playing tricks, and we are caught in a fine trap. Be so good as examine if the charge is in."

I examined my own at the same time, and was confounded to find them without any ball, and filled up with ashes.

"We

"We are betrayed," said I in a low voice. "Some traitor has done this. We are fallen into an ambuscade. Your life and mine will probably be the forfeiture of your neglect."

I leaped out of the chaise, and going up to the postillion, brandished my sabre over his head: "Villain," cried I, "you are in this plot—Confess! Tell me who has employed you, or I will send your head rolling under the feet of your mules."

He begged me to have mercy upon him for the sake of a large family. "What is that to the purpose," cried I; "do you provide for them by robbery and murder? Villain, speak quickly all you know of this infernal scheme, or I will scrape the flesh from off your bones."

I dragged the rascal to the ground, for I was extremely agitated, and certainly should have killed him on the spot, had he not on his knees confessed that, about noon, two men, the one like a gentleman, the other like his servant, came to the inn

where he lived at Calatravia, at the farther end of the town to where I had lodged, and hiring him as for a journey to Toledo, gave him a trifle to ride a couple of leagues from the town, and return by the Toledo road; that one of them went with him, and put up at the inn where I was, directing him in what he should say, the other returning to the town alone; that when my servant had charged the pistols, the horse was brought purposely to draw him out, in which time the servant entered and unloaded the pistols, telling him (the Postboy) they were to arrest the gentleman on the road by an order from the King, and took this caution to prevent bloodshed by our resistance; that they were to ride past us on the road, and if all remained in the same state he was to cry *Hem!* and smack his whip twice in the air as they rode by; but if we had discovered the change put upon us, he was to cry *who goes there?* but not to interpose in case of attack. And lastly, that about a league further they were

were to wait for us in a dell, where the narrowness of the road would not admit my servant on the side of the chaise, by which means his assistance would be cut off. "And this, your Highness," continued he, "is all I know, if these words were the last I was to speak in this world, and may all the martyrs curse me if I know any more."

I silenced his clamorous cries for mercy by ordering him to rise. "Your treachery," said I, "does not merit pardon; but I will grant your life on condition you follow my orders. What sort of person was he you call the master?"

"A dark, stern-looking man, exactly like an inquisitor, and indeed I did think he belonged to the holy office."

"Was he not tall, his eyebrows bent, and meeting together?"

A reply in the affirmative confirmed my suspicion on Don Padilla. I next inquired the figure of his servant.

"He was a terrible looking man," said

he, " with a malicious eye, so penetrating, that I was afraid when he looked at me."

This, thought I, must be Jacques. I have never seen him but in deceiving lights, and this is near my picture of him. I trembled for the safety of Fernando, when I had this instance of their malignant designs, and knew they must have either met, or passed each other on a road, where murder and outrage was common at noon day. I had no time to spare for reflection in the present moment. I stripped off my scarlet mantle, and exchanging with the postillion, obliged him to take my place in the chaise, at the same time solemnly vowing if he attempted to betray us by any signal, I would, in the first instance, wreak my vengeance upon him.

I then mounted myself upon the mule, and concealing my sabre under my dress, I ordered Raolo to keep, as usual, behind, and on the first assault to charge at once with his sword.

Having made this arrangement, we drove
forward

forward, my heart beating with variety of emotions. I remembered the adventure in the church, and I had no longer any doubt but the mysterious stranger had been Jacques, who had followed me at a distance to that sanctuary, where my own credulity contributed to betray me into his power. The drops of blood upon my hand now seemed an omen of my danger, which then I did not interpret aright. My apprehension for the safety of Fernando was extremely painful, and contributed not a little to detach my mind from the immediate dangers that surrounded myself.

We rode forward till we arrived at the hollow part of the road, above which, on either side were high cliffs, tufted with underwood: a place extremely well chosen for such an expedition.

No intimation gave us warning that any person was near, and I continued to drive forward at a rapid rate, urging the poor beasts at their utmost speed into the hol-

low, without making any shew of apprehension. No sound interrupted the silence of night but the noise we ourselves made ; and being arrived at the middle of the pass, I began to think our danger over, when a pistol was fired into the chaise from amongst the bushes, which overtopped the road.

I took no notice of this assault, as we could not see any individual, and admired the design of this infamous transaction. I gave the mules a lash, when, possibly angry at the postillion for not answering their signal, one of them fired a shot at me, which hit one of the mules, and caused him to plunge and rear in an ungovernable manner. In an instant after a carbine was fired into the chaise, and a loud cry from the miserable postillion made them conclude they had executed their business.

I judged from the number of shots that they had spent their first fire ; and calling to Raolo, I commanded him to follow me sword in hand. We clambered up the
banks,

banks, and made good our entrance into the hanging thicket, without receiving any injury from two or three pistol shots, which were fired at random.

When we reached the top of the bank, we found ourselves unopposed; nor could we, through the darkness of the night, discern the foe, who had not sufficient courage to wait the assault, though they had only the resistance of Raolo to fear, as they must have judged the valour of the supposed postillion a feint.

After searching round for some time, that they might not escape us by concealing themselves, we plunged our swords into every bush within fifty paces, and it was matter of conjecture how they could possibly have secured so silent a retreat.

Finding our researches useless, we returned to the road; but the chaise was gone. This was an unpleasant circumstance to persons in our situation. All my baggage and letters were in it. But fortunately none from Fernando relative

to our suspicions, nor any document that could give Padilla light into our intentions, supposing that he should have an opportunity to examine.

The most probable conjecture was, that the wounded mule had communicated its fright to its companion, and run away with the postillion.

Raolo's horse stood quietly at about one hundred yards distance, and mounting him together, we proceeded at an easy rate, Raolo delighting himself with the courage of the enemy, and the military trick we had played upon them.

We continued slowly forward, without meeting the smallest trace of the chaise. Towards the dawn of day we arrived at a little farm-house by the road-side. We alighted to seek some refreshment, and to provide some better conveyance. The instant we stopped at the gate, the owner of the cottage came up to us, and with visible emotion inquired if we were the persons who had been robbed on the road.

I was

I was surpris'd at this question, and replied, that we had been assaulted, but I believed not by common robbers, demanding at the same time his reason for the question.

"About two hours since," said he, "somebody knocked violently at the gate. It was dark, and I was just rising, for we begin our labours betimes. I was coming out at the door with a lantern to see what was the matter, when two men, strangely muffled up, ordered me to extinguish the light and follow them, or I should be a dead man in a minute. I could do no other than obey them. A chaise stood on the road, and I saw somebody in it, but they did not speak. 'Here,' said one of the men, 'take this parcel and those trunks, and give them to the next travellers, who will own them.'

"I knew not what to do in the business, as I feared being called to account some way or other as having a share in the plunder, and yet I wondered they should be so

free to part with it, unless they had taken out all the valuable articles. Well, Senors, their repeated threats frightened me, and having laid all the bundles upon the ground, I took up a trunk to carry it into the house. When I returned for another, the two cavaliers, who were mounted on horses, and the chaise, with the person who did not speak, were gone. Two of the bundles they took from the chaise are stained with blood, and I fear some poor gentleman has been murdered by these ruffians ; and now that I see you, I hope it is not your master who has been robbed. I assure you it was from force I admitted the goods."

I had waited without interrupting him. " I believe you, my honest fellow," said I, taking off the postillion's coat ; " this garment deceived you. I am a nobleman, who have been traitorously way-laid, and I imagine these articles you mention are mine ; if so, they bear the name of Denia. Can you describe the persons of the men you saw ?" " It

“It was too dark,” replied he, “they were in a tremendous passion, cursing and swearing at some mistake. I heard one of them say it would be best to fly, and the other muttered something, of which I could only make out the word—body.”

I was very well pleased at this information, and the countryman, whose name I think was Tormes, being an open-hearted hospitable man, we sat down to a rural breakfast, to us extremely welcome, after the events of the night.

I made no doubt from the blood on the bundles and the words of the men, that the postillion had received his death from their hands; “and thus it generally is,” said I, “tho’ not always in so visible and signal a manner, that the intentions of villains devolve upon themselves. Our destruction this night, appeared inevitable; betrayed by a miscreant to the vengeance of two men, who laugh at crimes if they can perpetrate them with impunity. Confiding in our own arms, when that confidence might
have

have been destruction : no way to escape or to defend ourselves appearing ; yet their designs are rendered abortive, and their weak and wretched instrument destroyed by themselves."

My spirits experienced a considerable flow upon this event, the landscape from the window appeared delightful, and the loved plains of Grenada seemed again to bloom before me. Gentle swellings loaded with grain broke the continuity of the level ground, and varied cultivation diversified the prospect to the eye, and painted the face of nature with variety of tints.

It was now the autumn, and the glow of ripening fruitage gladdened the view. Nature's richest stores were spread before her children, and there wanted only the thankful heart and the tranquil mind to spread happiness over the scene.

After a few hours rest, I dispatched Raolo to Toledo to procure a chaise. While he was absent, I indulged myself in a reverie of pleasing reflection, which the
imagery

imagery of this fine province increased; and while I sat wandering over the views before me, the tender recollection of Virginia stole upon me, and the high mountains that divided us, seemed as a barrier to our meeting any more.

Nothing could be more inviting to the frenzy of composition which lovers universally feel, than the glowing country before me, and I have no doubt but love gave birth to the muses. While I sat in the window I wrote these lines, the faults of which you must charge to the folly of love, for though it is the origin of rhyming, it by no means inspires the higher pieces of poetry

THE SIGH.



GO, gentle Sigh, to ease my breast,
And on Virginia's bosom rest;
Go, gentle Sigh, my heart now swelling,
And in her bosom make thy dwelling.

Go

Go Sigh, and bearing as you go
The scents of all the flowers that blow ;
Waft each perfume that breathes of pleasure,
To her, the pride of Nature's treasure.

Go, gentle Sigh, and speed thy way,
Warm from my heart without delay ;
Pour in her ear the love-lorn ditty,
And sweetly sooth her soul to pity.

Go, vagrant go, o'er dale and hill,
Nor stay thee near the tinkling rill :
Nor whisper with the whisp'ring rushes ;
Nor linger where the water flushes.

Let not the blushing village lass,
Attract, as o'er the lawns you pass :
Nor let her witching graces stay thee,
Lest tales unmeaning should betray me.

Go, gentle Sigh, to where the maid,
Reposes in the tranquil shade ;
Her ear with loves' complainings greeting,
Soft as thyself ; and ah ! as fleeting.

Or,

Or, if she thee disdain to hear,
 Thy pinions lightly waving near ;
 Still in her wanton tresses straying,
 Or in her garments idly playing.

Go, mingle with her balmy breath,
 Nor fear her anger will be death ;
 For life renewed shall bless thy daring,
 With her, ethereal zephyrs sharing.

Return then gentle Sigh, return,
 With rapture flow with ardor burn ;
 Inhaled by me (with bliss past telling)
 My breast shall be thy constant dwelling.



By the time I had run my thoughts to the last fancy, Raolo returned with a chaise. He had made inquiry upon the road, but had gained no information, and I made no doubt of their having, before the day should betray them, turned aside into some obscure cross-road, where they might dispose of the Postillion, or probably

bly concealed themselves in a forest not above a league distant, where they might bury him and depart at night.

At Toledo I made no delay, being impatient again to visit my paternal home, from which I had been near two years absent. My mother received me with a transport of satisfaction. At her entreaty I consented to quit the army and become a civil member of society. I found my fortune extensive as the honors it has to support, and I seemed to have only one wish to gratify to render me above the frowns of fortune: but without which, her gifts lost half their value.

I received letters from Fernando amongst the military dispatches, which tranquillized the fears I entertained for his safety. He spoke of his good health, and hinted at the mysteries which yet disturbed him. He seemed unwilling to trust matters of consequence by this doubtful conveyance, and I might acknowledge, that I could
only

only surmise his situation from dark and distant phrases.

I employed a nobleman of my acquaintance, and a person for whom I knew Don Padilla had some respect, to interfere in my favour, making him propositions that might have satisfied a prince, but he rejected all my overtures with unqualified contempt, protesting by all the universe, he would sooner hang his daughter upon a tree of the forest, than give her to a man, whom he considered as his most virulent enemy, and whom he hated with the greatest bitterness.

It was easy for me to guess the fears that rankled in his mind. He was far from ignorant that I was informed of his secrets, and wanted only positive proof to strip him of all his possessions. I likewise knew that in the midst of all his luxury he lamented having nothing but girls, who would carry his fortune into other houses if they married, and his name would be forever extinct. This passion for an heir,
united

united with licentiousness, had led him several times to offer his hand to different ladies since the death of Lady Zidana, and their refusal had increased the disease of his mind.

The last letter I received from Fernando is near twelve months since. It informed me that from reasons of imperious necessity he had changed his regiment, joining one that was under orders of embarkation for Ceuta in Barbary: he begged me to remember his unfortunate engagements, and pity the ill fortune of my friend.

I have applied through various channels to discover if he yet lives, but ineffectually; all my information being that he was taken prisoner in a sally made against the Moors. I have wearied you with a tedious narrative, Marquis, but I shall come immediately to what interests myself.

It was now nearly six months since I have become the slave of superstition, or the victim of a deep and unrelenting vengeance I have no power to avert.

It

It was in the gardens of Aranjuez where I delight to ramble, that I may indulge my taste for reflection, that I first experienced this strange and inconceivable event.

I had laid down upon a bank of flowers, watching the dimpling waves of the Tagus as they chased each other. Sometimes wearying my imagination about the fate of my friend, or picturing the pleasures I should share in this romantic spot, if Virginia could set beside me, or ramble through the fragrant shades of orange groves and myrtle alleys ; when I heard a voice, clear and distinctly pronounce my name three times.

I looked round to discover who it was, not knowing that any one was near me, but all again remained silent, and I could not perceive any person in the gardens. I called to inquire who wanted me. " Listen !" said a clear and soft voice, at which I arose, but could see nobody, though to my judgment the voice seemed within a few paces. I paused in wonder,
and

and the same voice said, " Listen, Marquis Albert de Denia, thou must die !"

An affecting palpitation seized me, I had scarce power to stand, much less to demand an explanation of this *unseen*. I heard not the smallest rustle amongst the shrubs ; I sat down, for I was unable to stand, and revolved in my mind all the omens of supernatural incidents which had attended me. The advice of my father's death, the drops of blood in the church of Calatravia, confirmed my mind in the truth of this indifinite oracle.

I waited in dreadful apprehension, expecting every moment, that my ears would be pervaded with a repetition of this fearful prophecy, or that my sight would be shocked by some awful phantom ; but no shade or sound came near me, except the sighs of the wind amongst the leaves.

I endeavoured to reason myself into spirits, by attributing the whole to a temporary delusion of high wrought imagination, but what imagination could
embody

embody the winds, or give to the breezes articulate sounds?

The prediction fastened on my weakened soul; all the energies of my mind could not repel its attack. You know the gardens of Aranjuez are formed on an island in the middle of the Tagus; no person is admitted to land there without permission of the gardeners, or entitled by rank. I inquired of them, if any stranger had been admitted; but for several hours they had seen no one, except myself. For what purpose also would any person take the trouble to act a farce of this nature?

Thus I perplexed myself, and the following day repaired to the same spot, which indeed was my favourite place in the garden. I walked cautiously round it, examining the rose trees and other sweet scented shrubs which formed a little wilderness of fragrance, and having satisfied myself that no human being was near, I sat down to wait the oracular sounds.

VOL. II.

C

I waited

I waited a long while, every moment fearing, yet expecting to hear the same voice. I did not wait in vain, I heard myself again called, and again my death was denounced. On the third day the same singular mandate came to my ears, but after that time I heard it no more.

I wondered every morning when I awoke, that I could again perceive the clear beams of the light. So powerful was the effect of this vague mandate, that I fancied my health to be gradually declining, and felt a decay of all my faculties.

To relieve my mind from this burden, (for I was ashamed to confide in any person lest I should only excite ridicule at my credulity) I endeavoured to find amusement in public assemblies; but wherever I went, the words—*Marquis Albert de Denia thou shalt die*, rung in my ears, and pervaded every moment of pleasure.

I endeavoured to reason myself into
better

better judgment : I know that I must die. I said I, there needed no superior agency to persuade me of that truth, but *when* is the question. On this the voice said nothing, and this was the only point, where more than human intelligence was wanting.

This consideration gave me hope. I wondered with myself at the strange turn my mind had taken, so different from the common course of human reflections. I became fonder of study, and religion being a subject suitable to the then tone of my mind, I frequently attended its duties. The solemnities of the church ceremonial admirably fitted my thoughts, and I began insensibly to lose a taste for life. I sighed for some friend to communicate with, and the memory of Fernando perpetually occurred. I had little doubt but he had fallen into some secret snare laid for him by the agency of Padilla, but it was not possible for me to revenge his death.

One Sunday evening, I had been at vespers, when a funeral dirge had been chant-

ed, and the solemn service particularly touched my soul with the most melancholy ideas. Such thought I, as I leaned upon a pillar, will be the sounds that these very walls may vibrate, when I myself shall be stretched upon the cold bier. The same solemnities will accompany my inanimate body to the tomb, when I shall moulder into dust and incorporate with the elements. What then, and where will be this certain something within me, which now reflects and *Is*?

Lost in profound meditation I returned home, and after an hasty repast retired to rest. In the middle of the night I was awakened by an heavy sigh, which seemed as from some person in the room. I was startled and demanded who was there. No one answered, and thinking myself deceived, I turned again to sleep. But I had scarcely closed my eyes, before a deeper sigh caught my ear. I started up in bed and looked round, but could not see any thing.

I listened

I listened to catch any sound, if the person should stir, and again I heard the same voice that I had heard in the garden at Aranjuez, pronounce the fatal words—
“ Listen! Marquis Albert de Denia thou shalt die.”

I sunk back on my bed with a deep groan. I expected that the next moment might be my last, and I seemed already to feel the pangs of a final dissolution. I ventured after a little time to raise my eyes. I beheld on the opposite wall the same dreadful words, in a scroll circled by death's-heads of varied coloured fire: my senses faded away before the phenomenon, and it would not have been astonishing if I had actually lost the powers of breathing.

I lay, I know not how long insensible. I awoke it is true, but it was only to a certainty that I must soon sleep for ever. I resolved without more delay to arrange all my temporary concerns, and sent immediately for a notary. My friends won-

dered at my singular proceedings, and though I could perceive they fancied me a little disordered in my head, I was too tenacious of the secret I possessed to make any one my confidant.

It is wonderful what power the imagination possesses over the body. Persons who tell us we have no souls, because the body ought not to act upon spiritual being, might as well say we have no bodies, because the mind, which is immaterial, *cannot* act upon palpable substance.

I wrote a long farewell letter to Virginia, which I charged Raolo personally to deliver after my death. Indeed I had some time indulged the fancy that she herself was already dead, never having heard from Gonzalez, and the remembrance of my dream, upon the stairs of the eastern wing, confirmed all my forebodings. I repeated frequently to myself—Yes charming saint, I shall soon follow thee through those starry regions, where I once beheld thee ascending in glory.

My

My mother already lamented the untimely death of her son, and my friends gave me over as lost. The claims of honor and ambition could not awaken my attention—I secluded myself wholly within the walls of my palace. My studies were entirely religious, and my amusement the performance of sacred music. This was the only employ that could catch my attention for my mind sunk fast towards insanity.

CHAP. II.

But 'tis strange :
 And often times, to foother us to our harm,
 The Instruments of darkness tell us truths,
 Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
 In deepest consequence.

ONE of the best physicians in Madrid attended me, but he could not remove the pressure on my spirits. In about a month I was confined to my bed, and my dissolution rapidly approached. Raolo attended me almost night and day, and endeavoured to divert my attention with discourses on Virginia, he no doubt suspecting that half my grief arose from the hopeless situation of my addresses. He exerted all his ingenuity to inspire me with hope, and
 to

to destroy the idea that haunted me of her death: but of what avail are arguments when the senses are untuned?

The fever preyed upon my spirits, and my strength was exhausted. A burning thirst tormented me which no medicine could assuage, and I lay in a state of torture. I was emaciated to a skeleton, and ardently desired death as a relief from a misery which no medicine or aliment could remove.

One night when my strength was fast ebbing away, for the fountain of my life seemed dried up, I lay without power of motion, partly supported by pillows, as I found greatest ease in that position. Raolo sat beside me in a chair, waiting for the period that was to deprive him for ever of his master: my mother sat upon one edge of the bed, and her stifled grief gave me pain. I ardently wished for something to cool the intolerable fire which seemed to run along my veins; but I had not power to move my tongue, which was parched to

the roof of my mouth. The hour of midnight was sounded by the clocks of Madrid, and the profoundest silence remained.

From the breathing of my mother and Raolo I judged them to be asleep, which I wondered at considering their attention. I found myself become faint; I endeavoured to raise my eyes to take a last look of a parent who had ever treated me with indulgence, before I closed them for ever upon mortal and terrene existences.

The lamp burnt dim; but whether it was deception or no, I beheld a person clothed in white, of a most singular fashion, sitting in a chair at the bed's-foot. I strained my sight to gaze upon this phantom. The light of the lamp gleamed upon him, and I saw clear and distinct the venerable features of my late father. I cannot say I was much alarmed: fear had lost its power, and I lay gazing upon this beloved object with a mixture of pleasure, and wonder and grief. The yellow tint of death overshadowed his countenance, his
eyes

eyes wanted the keen fire they were wont to express, and when he turned them upon me they appeared glazed and fixed. His dress was like nothing I had ever beheld, and when he stood up, it gave a majesty and solemnity to his figure which mortality can never assume.

He stretched out his hands towards me as he stood at the foot of my bed. A faint smile spread upon his face as he pronounced with a hollow, yet soft voice: "*Albert, my son, thou art not yet to follow me; thou shalt not yet die.*" Then pointing with his right hand to a side-table, where stood some fine fruit my weakness had not permitted me to taste, he again smiled, and raising his eyes with the elevated dignity of religious resignation, he turned silently away, and slowly quitted the chamber.

For some time, after the disappearance of this awful figure, my mind was in a state of unutterable satisfaction. The words he had uttered were as a flash of lightning

upon the bosom of the agitated ocean. They spoke peace and hope to my soul. I have since inquired with myself whether this appearance could have been reality. The fever I laboured under dwelt upon my spirits, and it might be the mere delusion of fleeting images through my brain: but whether it was truth or a fiction I shall never learn on this side the grave: be it what it would, I found strength sufficient to awaken Raolo, and ask for some fruit.

After eating a pomegranate, the burning thirst left me, and I felt new life animate my existence. A prodigious weight seemed removed from my head, I thought clearly, and reasoned with calmness. I recovered my health and strength in the course of a short time, and again ventured abroad into the world, where I received as many congratulations as though I had actually made my appearance from the grave.

My mind possessed a state of tranquillity which diffused satisfaction into my thoughts, and the world and worldly motives again resumed

resumed their force. I had but too long neglected to fulfil a particular injunction of my father's will, which was to repair the mansion-house on the banks of the Tagus, where he usually spent the months of harvest. In this place I hoped to enjoy repose, and as I took no part in public business, I resolved to lead a life of tranquillity and leisure. I dispatched Raolo with orders to collect workmen, and repair one of the wings which had long been in a shattered condition, and I proposed to find amusement in the plans I drew up for considerable improvements of the extensive gardens around me.

While I was thus planning schemes of future ease, a new calamity arose in my family, in the sudden death of my mother, who only lay ill twenty-four hours. It seemed as if some malignant spirit had been permitted to overwhelm me with distress. I had scarcely returned from the grave of that tender relation, indeed I was sitting in my own library the same evening, when
a servant

a servant put into my hand a letter, which a messenger had just brought me from my old housekeeper in the country. I opened it, and was struck with astonishment and grief at its contents. I believe I have the very letter in my cabinet—Yes, this is it.

“ *Honoured and dear Senor,*

“ I am almost killed with fright at the terrible accident that has happened. Raolo came down here, and hired a number of workmen, who began pulling and driving, and I thought would have torn the house in pieces. Your Excellenza knows the ruined state of the west wing; well, this they began to repair, and were getting forward apace for the little time; but alack! who knows what will happen in this world: only last night we all went to bed well, and this morning—But I must write methodically. Last night, after we had been some time in bed, the wind began to blow, rising to a perfect hurricane: not a cloud was to be seen, for I was obliged to leave my bed, expecting

expecting every moment that the house would tumble upon us. It rocked as if it had been an earthquake. I rang the alarm bell to assemble the servants together. We all of us expected not a stone would be left standing; when all on a sudden we heard such a dreadful crash, as if not only the whole house but the whole world had been dashed in pieces. The servants set up a great scream, and I expected every moment to be crushed in pieces. In an hour the wind became calm, and I then ventured to stir to see what was the matter. The whole west wing, your Excellenza, is blown down; two workmen were killed in the ruins. Raolo is no where to be found, and I am waiting in the greatest anxiety for your arrival to give directions."

You may naturally suppose, my dear Marquis, the effect such a letter was calculated to have upon me just returning from the funeral of my mother. The account seemed so strange, so out of the course

course of nature, that I doubted my own eyes. The non-appearance of Raolo afflicted me more than the loss of the west wing. "Some fiend certainly torments me," said I, laying down the letter. "I know not how I have incurred such persecution, unless Don Padilla is in league with the devil." This sentence arose without reflection, but it produced a long train of thought. The objects I had seen in the castle of Montillo, particularly in that chamber I had accidentally discovered, seemed to give some colour to this suspicion, and I was within a trifle of sinking again into my former malady.

I sighed earnestly for some friend to whom I might communicate my reflections, but all my acquaintance were too much engaged with their own interests, or too trifling to share with me a secret of this nature. I had lately visited places of public amusement; but if within the circle of my acquaintance I could not find a friend, how should I discover that gem beneath
the

the disguise of festive mirth, where all assume manners and characters different from truth.

I hastened the next morning to witness the devastation of my house, and found all things in confusion. The materials were scattered by the wind half over my grounds, as if some mischievous spirit had been sporting in the air. I employed a number of people to remove the ruins, where they lay in heaps, if possible to discover Raolo ; but what is inconceivable, not the smallest trace remained of him, and I was almost tempted to credit the story of the servants, who asserted that Lucifer had carried him away in a whirlwind.

I remained near three weeks on my estate to give directions, when learning your return from Portugal, and admiring the character your conduct there had procured you, which resembled much the friend I had lost, I resolved myself to converse with you, and the events of last night have determined my choice sooner than
my

my caution might otherwise have required.

It was with extreme surprise that I learnt this evening by accident that Don Padilla and his daughter Almira were in Madrid. You may judge from what you have just heard how much my introduction to Padilla would have been to your disadvantage; I therefore employed myself to better purpose, in inquiries amongst the servants: but I have been unable to penetrate into his reasons for immuring Almira, unless to gratify his evil disposition. See then, my friend, the situation in which I stand; lend me your council, and give me your heart. Let not a whisper of my secret pass over your lips, and we will, if possible, counteract Padilla; and beauty and merit will be our reward.

Here the Marquis of Denia concluded his narrative, which had sunk into the heart of his friend, and raised in his mind wonder he could not conceal, and an interest he resolved to pursue.

“ I am

" I am your's," said he, reaching out his hand to the Marquis. " To obtain Almira and Virginia, to rescue them from this ungenerous treatment, and to bring Don Padilla to justice, is a noble exploit, and what we owe to the public. It is for us who possess wealth and power to step forward as the instruments of justice, to protect the weak, to redress the wrongs of the innocent, and to punish the guilty."

The Marquis of Denia smiled at this ardor of his young friend. " What pity," said he, " we did not live at least one or two ages ago, we might then have mounted our mettled coursfers, and pranced away in glittering armour to rescue ladies, and to fight with giants."

" And why not now," replied Antonio. " Are the refinements of modern times to supercede virtuous actions? Had I been in love with Virginia, I would, ere this, have carried her away sword in hand from the castle. What enterprize could be more congenial

congenial to a generous mind? The ardor of such an undertaking would have prevented you from sinking into that painful disease, and your reward would have been a prize worth contending."

"But remember," said Albert, "that it would be her father you had to oppose. You have had no experience of this man. A failure in the attempt would have involved its object in certain ruin, and a convent for life would have been the least effects of his vengeance. I have learnt from Count Potenza that such is his design with regard to Almira; but his motives are too deeply buried in his own breast, even to rise to the eye of friendship."

Antonio expressed his apprehension at this intimation; he earnestly entreated his friend to think on some expedient to prevent such a design. They discoursed together till the sun had risen far above the horizon, and want of sleep made the eyes of Antonio weary; for he had not, like
his

his friend, been accustomed to watching; and they separated under agreement to meet again in the evening.

Antonio retired to his home, and the Marquis of Denia descended to his garden, to plan some means of procuring an interview with Almira. He had some acquaintance with Count Potenza, and he proposed to wait upon him for information. Want of rest the preceding night rendered action unpleasant, and he sat in a little arbour of evergreens watching the playing of a fountain before a sloping green, and settling in his mind to wait upon the Count after the usual hour of the Sieſta.

The interest Almira had created in the breast of Antonio pleased him, it being a double link to an unqualified friendship, and a chain which bound him in his own service. The fatal incidents which preyed upon his mind by being divided would be lessened; and were no other advantage to result superior to the pleasures of confidence, that alone was inestimable to a man labouring,

labouring, as he did, under a singular train of events, which seemed to mark him as the victim of a persecution he had neither power to foresee, or to controul.

He endeavoured to suggest the reasons which could have induced Don Padilla to take so far a journey, and for such a purpose. Why Almira, rather than Virginia, had incurred his anger, he could not conceive.

The day was clear and warm, and the tranquillity of the garden invited him to sleep. For about an hour his thoughts were suspended by slumber, when he was suddenly awakened by an hasty step across the path. He looked up, and started at sight of Raolo in a travelling dress, covered with dust, and as if he had that moment returned from a long journey.

“ Ha! my brave fellow,” cried the Marquis, “ where have you been? You seem to have some of the dust of my palace about you. Are you just returned from your travels?”

“ Yes,

"Yes, your Excellenza," replied Raolo in a sorrowful tone, "I am only this moment returned, and I had much better have remained at home."

"Then your journey was voluntary," cried the Marquis, more surprised than before. "Where in the world have you been?"

"Where I had much better not have been," replied he. "It is not for heads such as mine to think of succeeding where wiser men fail. A private soldier should never act without orders: but I intended to have taken the garrison by surprise, and I hope your Excellenza will forgive me."

"Forgive you," repeated the Marquis, "I must first know your crime. Sit down, Raolo, and do not fear to tell me every thing; you know I overlook much when the fault is acknowledged. This was a strange adventure of your's—sure you have not been at the castle of Montillo."

"Your Excellenza has guessed right," replied Raolo, in a tone of humility.

"You

" You remember your orders were to fit up the house, and furnish what was wanting till you came : so judging from myself, I thought a lady would be absolutely necessary, and what lady so welcome as the particular one of our choice ; and so—"

" And so what?" cried the Marquis, scarcely knowing whether to be angry or pleased. " Go on, Sir."

Raolo, turning his whip in his hand, began : " I knew that your Eccellenza had repeatedly sent letters to the old steward at the castle of Montilla, and your never receiving any naturally led you to conclude your lady dead ; for a mistress might as well be dead as not to answer her lover. Beside, I thought all your illnesses arose from pining after the lady, and I resolved in my own mind to carry her off to your country house, and surprise you when you least expected.

" I arrived safe at the little hamlet about a league from the castle, where I thought it best to take up my lodging ; and having

there some little acquaintance, I was heartily welcomed to the cottage of honest Perez and his two very pretty daughters."

"And these two very pretty daughters have stolen thy senses," said the Marquis.

"I hope not, your Excellenza: I have so little myself, that it would be a pity to lose them for the sake of a woman.

"Well, Perez," said I, after his first surprise was over, "how goes all at the castle? All in the old way, I suppose? The ladies are not married yet, are they?"

"No, no," says Perez, shaking his head as if he wanted to look wise: "Don Glum never lets any body see them. There they are, mewed up like two nuns. Gemini, says I to myself when I think what a pity it is—Now if I were a great gentleman, I'd soon scale the castle walls, and carry off these pretty charmers. O, by the Mass, what a glorious passion old Glum would be in! It would do one's heart good to see him at half a league's distance."

"But suppose you was in the garden,

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Perez,

Perez, how would you contrive, perhaps they never come there?"

"Yes, yes," replied he, "I know they do; there's my daughter, Marta, frequently goes with curds and cream to the castle, and she has once been in the gardens, helping the ladies to gather flowers; and she says they sigh so, and look so pale, that it grieves my heart."

"If that be the case," said I, "you will not object to my endeavouring to speak to them. Your daughter, Marta, can carry a line from me, and give it to the lady Virginia's own hand. I can easily get over the old tottering wall near the river side, and hide myself in the green temple. Perez would have fought shy, when he found that I was in earnest; but I silenced his scruples with a double doubloon, which the scholars at Toledo used to say was the boldest figure in rhetoric. Is old Glum at the castle?" said I. "He's not gone again to Grenada?"

"There has been the devil to pay," returned

turned Perez, grinning. "Nothing would satisfy him at his years but he must have a young wife, and so it came out what his visits to Grenada had been for."

"What do you say, Raolo?" cried the Marquis. "Is Don Padilla married again?"

"No, Senor," replied Raolo, "he was only going to be, but a stranger arrived just as he was leading the bride to the altar, and the match was broken off in confusion. Nobody knows who the stranger was, as he did not stay half an hour in the place; but as soon as he delivered his message, and created all the confusion he could, he mounted and rode away. Some people say it was no human being, but the ghost that frightened away the guests on the night of his marriage with Lady Zidana; but whatever, or whoever it was, Don Padilla was cheated of a wedding.

"This was all that I could learn about the matter. I lay by three or four days disguised like a peasant, never stirring from the cottage while there was as much light as

to see one's nose. Well, your Eccellenza, little Marta's day came to go to the castle, so I gave her a billet, just to say who I was, and where I would wait for the lady.

" Little Marta soon conned over her lesson, and no doubt acquitted herself very dexterously. The ladies were in a flutter at the unexpected news of my coming from the *handsome Marquis*; for so little Marta told me they called your Eccellenza: but she could not get them to promise to meet me. I fancied that I knew something about the character of the women, and I would have laid my last suit of regimentals to a maravidie that one or both would be there.

" Accordingly, as soon as it was dark, I stole through bye-paths till I came to the old wall of the garden, where it stands on the bank of the river. I found it more difficult to climb than I had supposed, and it was with some hazard I got safe into the garden. I picked out my way as well as I could, and after stumbling about a little, reached

reached the evergreen temple. I listened to hear if all was safe: for, thought I, the old Don may have some suspicion, though I did not conceive how; but, your Excelenza, when one's mind misgives them, they are afraid of their shadow."

"That is most true, Raolo," said the Marquis: "it is thence that villains are generally cowards: but proceed."

"I hid myself amongst the rose-bushes, and waited there till the clock struck twelve. How the old castle echoed with the heavy sounds. I would rather be guard upon an out post than in such a situation again; for I then recollected all the frightful stories I had heard about the castle being haunted; and now that the ladies did not appear, I wished myself safely back. Well, the half-hour chime went by, and no ladies came near me, so I began to think they had lost their curiosity; and so, thought I, I have made all this long journey for the purpose of laying here all night, and may now go back like a boy that has

forgot his message. Presently I heard somebody stepping lightly along the path, and as they came near, Raolo! Raolo! Raolo! says they in a low voice, which I knew directly belonged to one of the ladies, it was so soft, and so sweet, and so frightened.

“Here am I, lady, said I, jumping up, and stepping into the path.”

“Oh, merciful Virgin!” cried she, “I am wild with terror and apprehension. What brings you hither, Raolo? How does your master?”

“Charming Virginia!” ejaculated the Marquis: “did she indeed inquire after me?”—“No, Senor,” replied Raolo.”—“No,” cried the Marquis, “did not you say so this moment?”

“Aye, Senor, but I did not say who.—It was not Donna Virginia, it was Donna Almira. I made the same mistake at first myself in the garden. ‘I must not stay a moment,’ said Almira; ‘my sister Virginia has mislaid the letter you sent, and we know

know not where it is; she was too much flurried to come. Have you heard lately from the Marquis's friend, Fernando?"

"Yes, yes, said I, he was in good health and spirits. The Marquis, my master, is building a new house, and I have stolen away to see if I could not steal him a wife to be mistress of it; for you know, lady, an house without a mistress is no house at all.—She laughed, and inquired if I was really in earnest in my scheme, and why your Excellenza did not come, and how I would manage so difficult a business, and an hundred questions in a breath; just like all the rest of the ladies, thought I at the time, but I did not tell her so. I replied, that on the following night, if she and Lady Virginia would be in the garden at the same hour, I would have a boat ready on the river, and a ladder fastened on the wall: when nothing would be more easy."

"Perhaps in words, but not in fact," replied Almira. "I have run a thousand ha-

zards to-night, and must be back in a moment."

"In one moment, lady," said I, "you shall return; but after I have traversed so many leagues, it will be an ungracious reception my master will give me if I return alone. Surely it would be a life of greater pleasure in Madrid than here?"

"I confess," replied she, "if it were not for the danger, and if I could persuade Virginia, I should be willing to go. I am tired enough of this dreary, frightful old castle."

"Are you so," cried a voice harsh as the crashing of thunder, "by the deeps of hell thou shalt not remain long within it."

"My father! shrieked the terrified lady, and fell upon the steps of the temple in a swoon. Don Padilla paid no attention to his daughter, but drawing his sword, he made at me in the dark. I had no weapon but a little rapier and brace of pistols, nor dared I use these against him in his

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own garden. I leaped into a thicket of evergreens, and Almira being between us, in attempting to follow, he fell over her, and I escaped without farther difficulty.

"I made haste to inform Perez of this unfortunate business, and, poor fellow, he was almost as much damped as myself. Poor Marta spoiled her pretty eyes with crying, as she must no more visit at the castle. I was within an ace of blowing my brains out at this unfortunate end of my exploit; but recollecting, few as I had, I could not put them in again, I thought better of it. I quitted the cottage immediately, skulking about the forest like a fox round an hen-roost, but not a soul from the castle made their appearance the first day.

"On the second morning one of the men servants passed along the path towards the river with a fishing net. "Halloo! Comrade," cried I: "I suppose you come from yon castle?" "Suppose I do," returned he sulkily, "I'm no comrade of your's."—

"Many a better man has that honour," said I. "Come, come, how goes all at the castle, Martin, and Gonzalez, and Hugo, and all the lasses?"

"Mighty familiar," muttered he, staring at me. "What's all this to you? I don't know you."

"You forget your old friend," said I; "I know you, and by the time you and I have finished this flask of aqua vitæ, we shall know each other. I once lived at the castle myself; it was before your time."—"No, did you?" cried he gaping; "I have not been long there."—"I know that," returned I, "or you would have known me. Come, I'll help you to fish, I've a lucky hand at an haul; my father used to drag the net in the Bay of Naples, and my mother cried the produce through the city." The fellow shewed his large teeth, and clapping the flask to his mouth, I completely gained his heart.

"He informed me that Donna Almira was ill; that Don Padilla had given orders
I for

for a journey to Madrid in a few days, with intent to confine her in a convent, with the lady mother of which he was particularly acquainted.

“ This intelligence was sufficient. I soon found an excuse to leave him to his fishing, and hastened to Tolosa, where I had left my horse. I thought very likely this story of his going to Madrid was only a feint, to conceal the true place where he meant to bury Almira; and being determined that he should not beat a march without pursuit, I waited several days in ambuscade for him. He set out at last, well mounted and armed; I followed upon the track, keeping so far in the rear as not to be discovered. He arrived in this city yesterday afternoon, and I should have been in at night but my horse fell tired: and now, your Excellenza, I have only to ask your forgiveness of the blunders I have unintentionally committed.”

The Marquis, at the conclusion of this story, could not but admire the zeal of his

lervant, which had undesignedly produced so unpleasant a consequence ; and as it explained to him incidents and motives which had before perplexed him, he contented himself with cautioning Raolo never to be guilty of a similar crime, it not being his place to judge what was fitting, or what was best, since all his conclusions must be drawn from the surface of things.

The Marquis of Denia, on this information, determined to postpone his visit to Count Potenza, where he ran the hazard of meeting Don Padilla ; he even thought it preferable that Antonio should make his court through the medium of that nobleman, without mentioning his connection with himself. He wished indeed for an interview with Almira, that he might speak of her sister ; but he knew not how to effect this with security, as he had no doubt her father would guard her with unremitting vigilance.

In the evening Antonio did not fail visiting his friend. They took a walk together

gether on the Prada, in hope that Almira might be there with some of the Count's family. In this they were disappointed, Don Padilla and the Count being in company.

"Now for a *coup de main*," said the Marquis of Denia: "we must not be seen here together, or my scheme will be frustrated. Throw yourself in their way, you are acquainted with the Count, engage them, and detain them for an hour; I will hasten to his palace, and see if I cannot procure an interview."

Antonio was charmed with this scheme, and wishing the Marquis success, in the next turn of the walk threw himself in the way of the Count and Padilla, addressing himself particularly to the former, while to the latter he was reservedly polite. The common subjects of the day were discussed: when observing a lady, whose air and manner had some slight resemblance to that of Almira, he inquired the Count's opinion of her; observing he thought her at a distance

tance very much like the lady he had had the honour of seeing the preceding evening at the Duke D'Alcantara's. "I think," said he to Don Padilla, "you called her your daughter; I may be mistaken."

"I know not," returned Don Padilla in a forbidding manner, "that I said any thing about her: you have a better memory than I, Marquis."

"We always remember what interests us," replied Antonio, bowing. "Had that lady not been your daughter, I should have desired a further acquaintance."

"And why not as it is," said the Count. "What objection have you to her as the daughter of Don Padilla?"

"Don Padilla may perhaps object to me," said Antonio, watching his countenance. To which the Count replied gaily: "That is impossible. Come, come, let me introduce the Marquis Antonio de los Velos to Don Padilla as his future son-in-law."

"Never," muttered Padilla, frowning.

"You

" You must and shall alter your mind," said the Count.

" How know you that ?" returned Padilla slowly. " Did you ever know me change the purpose I had determined? This business is settled."

" But you would not surely refuse an handsome settlement for your daughter, and a gallant nobleman for your son? I should not have hesitated in giving Antonio any relation of mine, but unfortunately I have none marriageable of the female kind about me. My sister is rather too old, and has but one eye, and my daughters are not in their teens."

" What you might do is no guide to me," replied Padilla. I have vowed that my daughter shall dedicate her life to the service of Heaven, and I consider the engagement as sacred."

Antonio looked at him, as much as to say, And is Don Padilla become an observer of vows! The look was not unnoticed by a man like him, whose mind was
tormented

tormented by every suspicion; and from that moment he not only felt aversion, but endeavoured to penetrate into the character and connections of Antonio, yet in a way that deceived the Count into a belief that his curiosity arose from a latent inclination to the connection. The Count began to enumerate so many qualities and qualifications, that Antonio, from modesty, was obliged to silence him; and for the rest of the evening more general subjects were discussed.

Antonio, who was impatient to learn the success of his friend, took leave when the evening began to close, and the company to thin; and the Count, on their return, recurring to their former discourse, endeavoured to persuade Padilla into a change of opinion, but without effect, to the no little astonishment of Count Potenza, who began to suspect that there must be a great and a secret reason for the refusal of an offer so every way unobjectionable.

The Marquis of Denia hastened to the
palace

palace of Count Potenza : he was admitted by the servants without question, being well known, and hastened to pay his respects to the Count's sister, Lady Bertha, with whom he found, as he expected, Donna Almira. She blushed at his unexpected entrance, but had sufficient presence of mind to check the particular questions he was going to address to herself by a signal for his silence. Lady Bertha being blind of one eye, they conversed at intervals by signs, the Marquis urging her to allow him a moment's audience in private, which she seemed afraid to grant, as her father might suddenly return.

" Don't you think it a great pity, Marquis," said Donna Bertha, " that so fine a young lady should be condemned to a cloister ?"

" Not only a pity," cried the Marquis warmly, " but a most unpardonable cruelty. I cannot think Heaven well served, by a vow against the first commands of God to man."

" You

"You think exactly as I do," said Donna Bertha. "I was telling Don Padilla but this afternoon all I thought on the subject, and I told him also that I thought he refined upon his barbarity, by just allowing his daughter to taste for a moment the pleasures of existence, purposely to deprive her of them for ever. He replied, she would not be able to pray from her heart against the temptations of life, if she had not some little knowledge of what they were."

"His motive is now very clear," said the Marquis, looking at Almira; "but how can it be frustrated?"

"Make her your wife," said Lady Bertha, rising up abruptly; "I shall leave you to settle the terms." On which, without further ceremony, she quitted the room, having no doubt observed that the Marquis and Almira were much better acquainted than they seemed willing should be known.

"This is beyond my hopes, my charming

ing cousin," cried the Marquis, starting up and saluting her. "Last night I dared not make a single inquiry lest I should betray myself. Now, tell me all that I can have interest in knowing. Tell me what were the consequences of the blunders of Raolo? Tell me, if Virginia yet remembers me?"

"She has not forgot you," replied Almira, "however painful it may be to remember those whom we can never hope to see. But you say nothing about Fernando, Marquis! What is become of your friend?"

"I know not," replied the Marquis; "I have not heard from him for many months; but I have another friend equally dear, who does justice to your merits; let him supply to you, as he does to me, the friend we have lost; let him even be more, for you know, my dear cousin, Fernando was not what you wished him to be."

"I understand you," said Almira blushing, and sighing: "I suppose you mean that young man who rescued me from the
flames

flames last night. I acknowledge that gratitude obliges me to esteem him. There was something in his manner that affected me, probably from my ignorance of the world; and I confess I could have wished him for a brother, to share our confinement in the castle. But now, Albert, that is over: I am condemned to that state for which I am most unfit. If to me the dreariness of the castle of Montillo was insufferable, how much more so will be the routine of a convent, and that convent the Dominican Nuns."

"Don Padilla is not cruel by halves!" exclaimed the Marquis. "But is there no means to rescue you from this fate?"

"Alas! no. My father has sworn by the most fearful oaths. His temper has, if possible, been a thousand times more gloomy. He is at times, I do think, actually mad—My sister trembles for her life, and I know not, when I am away, what will become of her."

"I swear," cried the Marquis, glowing with

with resentment ; “ I swear by every thing sacred I will protect her.” Then taking her hand, he lowered his voice, and said : “ Let my friend, Antonio de los Velos, also protect you. He will fly at a word to lay himself, his life, and his fortune at your feet—”

“ Hold,” said Almira ; “ do not speak thus to me. You rend my heart—Ah, Marquis, what sacrifice would I not make to avoid a greater. Fernando—”

“ Cannot be yours,” said the Marquis tenderly. “ Dearest Almira, you would not wish for the hand of a man who has no heart to dispose of, if he even lives.”

“ I know, I know,” cried she passionately, “ your friend always treated me with indifference. I see too plainly I must take the detested veil.”

The Marquis smiled.—“ Think better of it,” said he, “ an handsome young nobleman, with a considerable revenue, must outweigh a rosary and a crucifix. A little time will probably bring you to my way of reasoning,

reasoning, and at worst you have a year's probation before you perform the vows. In twelve months, my cousin, how many greater changes will happen than the alteration of a lady's mind. Now let us speak of your sister."

He was interrupted by the return of the Count's sister, who significantly inquired if Almira was to be a nun.

"I fear it indeed," replied the Marquis, "unless you can persuade her there are more charms in a nobleman's palace than a convent."

"I shall scarcely have time," replied she, "before the return of my brother; it is already near nine o'clock."

"So late!" cried the Marquis, starting up, "I have already taken two hours instead of one."

The Marquis hastened away, admiring on what contrivance Antonio could have fallen to hold them so late. He had not been gone many minutes when the Count and Don Padilla returned.

"We

"We have met with a lover for you in our ramble," said the Count to Almira (Don Padilla being engaged at the window); "but I know not how we shall bring the business to bear."

"Don't give yourself any concern," replied his sister. "We have had one lover here ourselves, so you may abandon your's to a forlorn hope."

"May I know who that is?" inquired the Count.

"We must barter for an exchange of secrets at least," answered she; "but Almira, have I your permission?"

"Nay," returned Almira in a low voice, and a look of alarmed apprehension, "you have gone too far to require it, but the Marquis is no lover of mine, indeed."

"Why that *indeed*?" said the Count laughing; "I can answer for the Marquis that he is, he told me so himself this very evening. He even made proposals to your father, and it is not a quarter of an hour since he left us."

Donna

Donna Bertha could scarce refrain laughing out. "You would not," said she, "persuade me I have neither eyes nor ears, the Marquis de Denia has been with us more than two hours, and it is but this moment—"

"The Marquis de Denia!" cried Don Padilla, turning round in anger—"Has the Marquis de Denia dared?—But how came you, Almira—Was you not aware of my detestation, my utter and inextinguishable hatred? Death and fury! Am I to be thwarted at every turn by this wretch? But I will some day have revenge. Count, I beg your pardon: my passions are sometimes too much for my discretion. Almira, I will be obeyed—prepare this very night for the convent."

"Hold a moment," cried the Count; "this is a very foolish business. The Marquis came as a visitor to me, your daughter denies his being a lover of her's, and my sister declares what she said was in railery."

"I know

“ I know better, I know better,” repeated the enraged Padilla, as he stalked about the room with a distorted countenance. “ That wretch crosses me at every turn, but it is my own fault ; I am a fool, a child, thus to trifle.”

Amidst these exclamations, he suddenly recollected their impolicy, and shrinking into his usual gloominess, he spent the rest of the evening in sullen silence, firmly determining that on the next day his daughter should begin her noviciate.

Antonio hastened from the Prada to meet his friend, when their mutual success was related, and future plans discussed, without any positive arrangement. “ I am going to-night,” said Antonio, “ to treat her with a Serenade. I have provided music, and the words are from an old Spanish romance. I have a tolerable voice, and will sing them to a guitar if you will accompany me.”

To this the Marquis made no objection; but having need of repose, he lay down for an hour to rest. He was awakened by his impatient friend about eleven o'clock, who, having provided an excellent band of musicians, Raolo and Philip, Antonio's servant, attended them well armed, nothing being more common than rencounters in the streets from the jealousy or mistakes of lovers.

They were not long in reaching the palace of the Count Potenza, where, having taken their station, the musicians preluded with a symphony, which ceasing, Antonio sung the following air, accompanied by his friend:



SERENADE.

ART thou awake, or art thou sleeping,
 Love may attack thee, Lady Fair?
 Where is the heart so safe in keeping,
 As to elude the secret snare?

Cupid,

Cupid, a wanton, flily enters,
Sometimes the eye, sometimes the ear :
Boldly to gilded domes he ventures,
Wrapp'd in the garb of bashful fear.

SYMPHONY.

Rise thee, and hear me, Lady Fair.

Then, dearest maid, be not disdainig,
That power the proudest once must feel :
Lift to an heart whose fond complaining
Love's brightest passion would reveal.
Then again close thine eyes in slumbers—
Should Love perchance invade thy breast,
Music attuned to softest numbers,
Shall soothe thy mind to sweetest rest.

SYMPHONY.

Rise thee, and hear me, Lady Fair*.



After an interval of silence, they again performed the same air; but Almira not appearing at the lattice, they were obliged

* This Air, set to music, may be had of G. Walker, No. 106, Great Portland-street, price 1s.

to retire without the satisfaction of knowing she had heard them, though of that there could be little doubt. Their company was too numerous to dread any common attack, and they returned in safety to the palace of the Marquis of Denia.

Antonio early the following day sent a present of the finest fruit Madrid could produce, accompanied with a note of respectful compliments to Padilla; but he was deaf alike to interest, to reason, and to nature.

CHAP. III.

Thrice blessed they that master so their blood
 To undergo such maiden pilgrimage !
 But earthlier happy is the rose distilled,
 Than that which withering on the virgin thorn,
 Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

SHAKSPEARE.

EARLY in the morning Don Padilla conducted his daughter to the Convent of Dominican Nuns, with a severe charge to the Lady Mother of the foundation that she should not permit any stranger to see, much less hold correspondence with his daughter. It was his knowledge of her severe and inflexible disposition which caused him to select her house from that of many others in more eligible situations ;

he knew the mother, St. Agatha, would measure out to those around her that portion she herself had partaken: having been dragged from the arms of a favoured lover in the prime of her life, and buried within those barren and unpitying walls: in place of learning from them to commiserate the woes of others, from a wrong turn in her disposition, arose an inveterate hatred against any who presumed to aspire to greater pleasures than she had experienced, and she considered the exercise of her power as a just retaliation upon fortune.

Under such a superior Almira could expect no indulgence; and when the gate which barred her from the world closed upon her, she wished again to have had the old castle to ramble over with her sister Virginia, to share in her conversation, and to plan some little scheme of innocent amusement. The narrow gloomy cloisters were even more solitary than the heavy gothic galleries of the Castle of Montillo, and the emblems of religion inspired more
reverential

reverential awe than the relics of martial grandeur.

Almira was of that disposition which wished for some companion to share the pleasures of friendship; her heart was too gay for those solitary scenes of endless monotony, and the night which had first introduced her to an assembly, obliterated in a few moments the reflection of what had brought her to Madrid. This fairy scene was as transient as it was bright; she felt (as her father had intended) in greater force the misery of her situation.

She had placed her affections at a first acquaintance with her cousin Fernando, not from any motive of comparative preference, but because he had been the only young man with whom she had been in any way familiar; and his coolness and indifference perhaps augmented the flame.

In this habitation of piety, she looked round in vain for a sister open and candid as herself; for a bosom that might share her confidence in the purity of female love.

All here were cold and repulsive. Music indeed warbled on their lips, but charity had no abode in their hearts. Sins long since committed rankled with corrosive violence on minds which no other occupation could divert from reflection. Regret and unmeaning repentance soured the disposition of those who had too late discovered that they had chosen wrong; and few, very few, tasted the inebriating cup of enthusiastic religion, which enabled them to look with indifference upon the contrasting gaiety of the world that surrounded them.

Almira secluded herself as much as she could with propriety in her own cell, where she could not avoid repining at the harshness of her lot; and in place of breathing petitions to Heaven for grace to adopt and become the habit, she daily uttered wishes at the foot of the altar that Fernando, or even the Marquis de los Velos, might find means to rescue her. The routine of religious ceremony was but a partial amusement,

ment, and could not relieve her mind from its weight of overbearing sadness. It even augmented her serious reflections, and she found herself fast approaching to that apathy, which arises from universal disgust.

Amongst the sisterhood Almira could distinguish no friend, but amongst the boarders was a young lady, whose name was Saphira, whose innocent conversation and lively remarks engaged her attention; and though her years (being scarcely sixteen) admitted not of unbounded confidence, yet her company was amusement and pleasure.

They read together, but it was the dry, uninviting morality of the fathers. They sung together, but it was hymns and religious airs. They rambled together in the garden; but it was in a garden where every object reminded them of mortality, and every step might be supposed to pass over the mouldering bones of some departed friend. Melancholy yews and solemn cypresses formed the alleys; no flower

of varied hue, or brilliant appearance, was admitted into this sanctuary ; and which ever way the eye turned, sadness and silence seemed to sit brooding upon death. The termination of the walk opened not upon a beautiful vista, or capacious temple ; a shade of impenetrable twilight mingled them in confusion, as though the glorious beams of the sun were too gay for admission, where mistaken piety had placed her abode.

This garden, dreary as it was, was preferable to the interior of the building, where shade spread its gloom at noon day, and pale figures in long white robes, with black veils and black girdles, glided through the galleries and cloisters like inhabitants of a spiritual world. Almira discovered with surprise, that even in these abodes of supposed tranquillity, where the passions of the heart should have been charmed into slumber, that discord and ambition had extended their influence, and occupied in the bosoms of too many the place of devotion.

The

The Abbess was in the decline of life, and the senior sisters each had a view to the succession, which created parties and cabals within the walls, as inveterate, perhaps, as those of the different colours in ancient history. Almira was yet too insignificant to be courted by either, any further than for her opinion, whether Mother Urbania was not more preferable than Mother Isola? Such questions, which to her inspired no interest, and to which she was wholly indifferent, she declined with delicacy, observing that it was not for her who had so recently entered the society to form a judgment of her superiors. Saphira was equally uninterested; but even her youthful observations pointed against the folly and eagerness of women, and these women far advanced in life, aspiring to the transient shadow of power, when it was almost an equal chance whether themselves might not first become inhabitants of the grave.

“ There must be something sweet in the possession of power,” said Almira one day

to her young hearer, "or why should these old ladies grasp at its possession with so much violence: for my part, I should like to be the queen of some flowery island, guarded round with high walls, that might defend it alike from enemies and the attacks of the ocean. I would have all my subjects beautiful and peaceful, and I would dispense to them every blessing in my power to bestow. I would have fine palaces, fine gardens, elegant entertainments of music and dancing, and the whole kingdom should be a little paradise of enchantment."

"But who," said Saphira innocently, "would you have to build all your palaces, perform on your music, or work in your kitchens?"

"That is true," replied Almira, "nothing can be performed without labour, and where there is labour there will be discontent, and where there is no labour there will be heart-burning and jealousy about insignificant trifles, such as gangrenes the real pleasures of contemplation within these

walls; walls, which would otherwise hold out an asylum, much to be prized by those who have been unfortunate, who have lost all their friends, or who are weary of the world."

"And I think," said Saphira, "one must be all these before they can admire and love these gloomy little chambers, and these moping nuns. For my part, when I am obliged to go along these dark galleries by myself, I am almost afraid some spectre will start upon me from the obscurity, for one can neither see before nor behind, it is exactly like a fog of twilight mist."

Almira, in company with this young friend, endeavoured to soften down the rigours of solitude; but she could not suppress the repinings of her heart. Fernando's indifference accounted for his long silence; but the same excuse did not exculpate the Marquis de los Velos: he, who pretended to be so deeply enamoured could yet suffer days and weeks to pass away without so much as one visit, or the smallest
token

token of remembrance. She was ignorant of the restriction placed upon her, which prevented her receiving any message, visitor, or letter, and she knew not the ineffectual devices of Antonio to gain admission: her mind began to be dimmed by the gloom around it, and hopeless dejection saddened her thoughts.

Her little companion, who, till the death of her parents, had been habituated to all the splendour and vivacity of the world, was even more affected than Almira by the contrast. Her mind insensibly imbibed all the terrors which strict religious discipline, when united with bigotry, is calculated to inspire. Her sprightly temper lost its tone: her mind became the prey of fictitious horrors, and all her thoughts turned upon futurity. The friendly discourses of Almira by degrees became irksome, and, like a vitiated taste, nothing could give her pleasure that did not lead to the general subject of her conversation. For whole days she would ramble in the darkest recesses of the garden,

garden, and she soon became so changed, that neither her sentiments nor her person could have been known for the same, after a confinement of less than three months. Her mind had not had sufficient experience to preserve its tone; it sunk beneath the awful ceremonies and melancholy duties of a convent. Her health decayed, and it was with extreme affliction Almira beheld this lovely girl sinking fast into the grave.

She endeavoured to divert her mind with more lively prospects; she attended her with an affectionate interest which deprived herself of rest, and she mourned over her as a blighted flower withering before its perfections were fully disclosed.

It is impossible to be perpetually in any company without imbibing insensibly the sentiments of that company, whether they be vicious or whether they be good: so Almira found that the constant habit of attending the innocent Saphira, arrested and fixed her own mind upon the awful mys-

teries of religion, which, added to the daily lectures they attended, were calculated to fill her mind with indifference for life, and incline it to adopt the manners, and become less repugnant to the idea of taking the irrevocable vow.

She attended with more fervour the service of the church, when she quitted the couch of sickness: she felt not so much aversion to her lot, and there were times when she even thought that if Saphira could remain as her companion, she should not feel much reluctance at renouncing for ever the vanities of a transient life. Of this there were no hopes, for the sun never arose without witnessing some alteration or decay in her friend's person, and she looked forward with painful anxiety to the short period which should terminate her transient existence upon earth.

Saphira was conscious of her approaching dissolution, and beheld it with pleasure. "My dear friend," said she one evening as Almira sat by the side of her bed,

bed, "wherefore do you weep? I feel something within me that says we shall soon meet again. Do you not remember the toys you so admired when a baby, the fondness you professed for them? and did you not think you could never part from them? But as you grew up, how insignificant they became in your eyes, and you then threw them away as worthless trifles—Just so the soul learns to despise this world, as it gains a knowledge of the future."

Saphira shortly declined beyond the powers of medicine, and Almira, while she beheld her, frequently shed tears, reflecting that but a very little time would go over them ere those polished limbs would become flaccid, ere those eyes would cease to convey impressions of intelligence; and that voice, harmonious as music, be silent for ever. "O death!" cried she, as she sat on the little coarse bed in the narrow dark chamber: "O remorseless death! thou tearest asunder all the connections of love, family, and friendship. Thou solemn ambassador

ambassador of futurity, no bribe can turn thee from thy purpose, no consideration stay thine hand."

A deep sigh caught her attention ; she started, and looked fearfully round. Saphira had fallen into a feverish slumber, and her sighs arose more from bodily oppression than the thoughts of her mind. For two days she continued to linger, every hour apparently at the last extremity ; and on the third she breathed her last in the arms of her weeping friend.

Almira was inconsolable at this event, though so long expected. She threw herself upon the corpse of the departed maid, and gave way to an agony of tears which relieved her heart. This was the first friend she had ever lost by death, and she had difficulty to believe, though reason confirmed it, that she was indeed gone for ever. It seemed so incredible, that without any external violence or struggle the principle of existence should depart its abode, and she gazed with earnest anxiety
expecting

expecting that those lips might again, if but for once more, pronounce some endearing sentence of affection.

At last she unwillingly withdrew, being unable to attend the last offices of friendship; and throwing herself upon a chair in her own little chamber, she remained for a long time in a reverie of grief which clouded her understanding, and for a time rendered life indifferent.

A young lady, whose name was Valedia, had been received as boarder the day preceding this melancholy event. She was related to many noble families: the liveliness of her temper engaged the hearts of her friends, and it was with surprise they saw her adopt a resolution so unfit for the sociability of her manners. The affection Almira bore towards the dying faint was amongst the first subjects of conversation, and she professed an earnest desire to become acquainted with a character which she conceived to resemble her own. She refrained breaking in upon the sacredness
of

of grief; but when the first transports of passionate affection had subsided, she introduced herself to the cell of Almira, whose mind could not resist the soft tone of her conversation, and from that moment an attraction acted mutually between them. She seemed to Almira as sent by Heaven at the moment when she most required a confident and friend, and the one listened while the other related the merits of the departed Saphira.

That young lady had been a general favourite in the convent: her birth was high, her connections great, and her youth deprived jealousy of its sting. All the nuns lamented her loss, and celebrated her virtues as a saint, preparing to solemnise her obsequies in a manner at once grand and impressive.

Almira and Valedia prepared to attend this ceremony.

On the fourth night after her death, the sisters, all clad in white, with black crape veils down to the ground, and black girdles,

dles, repaired to the church of the convent, which was illuminated with tapers. The altar was hung with black, and the vaults were open into the body of the church. The novices, dressed in white, bore the coffin with the body of their sister, and the Father Confessor chanted before them the solemn service.

The monks who attended the duties of the convent were habited in black, and ranged themselves on each side beneath the steps of the altar. When the whole were seated, a solemn mass was performed for the repose of the dead.

Almira was too much affected to bear an active part, and sat down on one side leaning upon the bosom of Valedia. From the deep grief which seized her mind at the solemnity around her, she was aroused to thoughts above earthly things, by the performance of a grand Anthem and Requiem. It was opened by a mournful dirge upon the organ, when the monks and
nuns

nuns alternately, or in chorus, performed
the following

REQUIEM.

SOLO—*By a Nun, accompanied with a mournful
Symphony.*

Vain are our cares, vain are our fears,
Or hoping of to-morrow ;
Man, through this transient term of years,
Is still the child of sorrow.
The wav'ring breath of human life,
As burns awhile the taper,
So shines midst want, and pain, and strife,
Then vanishes in vapour.
Say, what is man, that he should be
By Heav'n's Most High regarded ?
Or how from vice, and sin set free,
With future life rewarded ?

RESPONSE —SOLO, *by a Monk.*

He who for human nature died,
In mercy will forgive ;
And those who in his power confide,
Shall in his glory live.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Then raise the lofty organ's note
Peal on peal, resounding high ;
Strains that up to Heav'n may float,
And wake the concord of the sky :
Then louder, louder, louder sing,
Hozannas to our God and King.

SOLO.

Ye gates cerulean backwards fly,
Ye everlasting doors give way,
She comes—a daughter of the sky,
And strains celestial round her play.



CHANT *to the* VIRGIN.

Receive, O Virgin, mother of mankind,
This fainted daughter to thy holy rest ;
To thee her spotless spirit is consign'd,
To thee she comes a meek and peaceful guest.
On earth awhile she bloom'd a fragrant flow'r,
No roughen'd thought disturb'd her tranquil mind ;
But soon elapsed, of life her fading hour,
She fled, and left mortality behind.
Ye sister angels, bending down to hear
The song of glory, which we feebly raise ;
Benignant smile, as with a list'ning ear
Ye catch the tribute of our partial praise.

TRIO.

TRIO.

No more will we on earth repine,
A sister mild, a friend sincere ;
In worlds of glory shall she shine,
Where crimes ne'er move the secret tear.
Angelic spirits, glad prepare
Robes of white and spotless shade,
On untextured pinions bear
The spirit of this happy maid.

RECITATIVE.

To Paradisial bow'rs for ever green,
Where palm-trees blooming cool the fervid ray ;
And blazing glory, thro' the sacred scene,
Sheds splendid grandeur in eternal day.
There saints and seraphs, near the living streams
Of flowing fountains, ever mild and pure ;
In smiling visions, or in grateful themes,
Praise Him, who was, and ever shall endure.

GRAND CHORUS.

Loud, loud hallelujahs, ascending on high,
Archangels and seraphs enraptur'd reply
In chorus, still rising, that never knows end,
Loud, loud hallelujahs for ever ascend.



The

The winding up of the last chorus was inexpressibly grand. The body of harmony seemed to fill every part of this extensive building: and Almira forgot in the rapture of sound, and the ideas of eternal glory it inspired, all the particular griefs which hung upon her soul. She had given wings to her imagination, and trod in fancy unimpeded through the starry firmament, mingling with bright and ærial spirits in the ineffable pleasure of supernal delight.

From this delirium of soul she gradually recovered as the sounds died away, and the notes ceased to vibrate along the aisles of the church; but it enabled her to attend with calmness to the last offices to be performed. The whole company descended the gloomy stairs into the vaults, the organ continuing a slow movement, till the tones were wholly lost in the silence of the tombs.

The dim tapers sparkled through the gloom, scarcely bringing to light the rows of mouldering coffins which hung with yel-

low and clammy dews, while from the arched roof distilled petrifactive drops. The timid nuns cast many a fearful glance upon this last abode, where each knew some future hour would bring themselves; and they secretly seemed to say: "There, or there, must *I* lay: there shall I moulder into dust, and there remain till the final consummation of all things.

The coffin was placed by the side of many others, and left a vacancy for one upon the top of it. "There," said Almira to Valedia, "there, upon the *house* of my friend, let me be placed." She shuddered at the dismal prospect. "No one can tell," said she, "how soon I may be there, left in total darkness, and lost to self-consciousness."

As the sad procession returned, the nuns cast many a fearful glance of inquiry behind them, pale and trembling at the reflected shadows which crept along the wall, and stretched over the coffins. Each stole silently to their cell, to meditate on the things

things they had witnessed; and for that night the machinations of jealousy and ambition were unattended.

Almira bade her new friend good night, and placed her lamp at the foot of her crucifix, where an hour-glass stood that was now run out. She turned it, and sat down in a chair opposite, gazing upon the sand as it ran, till her mind was bewildered in melancholy fancies. The last grain fell, and she was again turning the glass when she heard, or fancied she heard, soft and solemn music steal upon her ear through the stillness of night. She listened. The sounds swelled clearly along the passing air.

“It is then no fancy,” thought she; “it is not the embodied vibration of the anthem returning upon my ear; it is as a symphony of spirits in the air; and who knows but my Saphira is greeting me with the music of her companions.” In a little time the sounds melted into air, sinking into a tone that could scarcely be caught, when a voice clearly and softly pronounced the

name of Almira. She started up, and opened the door into the corridor, but no one was near. With a sensation of awe she closed it again, and solemnly placed herself before the crucifix. Again the voice whispered Almira, and she looked round with straining eyes. The lamp before the crucifix glimmered and died away, and all around remained dark and profoundly silent. Again the music arose, and swelled in numbers so sweet and so divine, that fear was charmed into pleasure. A gradual light imperceptibly shone in the chamber, increasing into brightness, and a form of smiling and lovely beauty by degrees became visible. Streaming robes of azure and white played around the form in alternate foldings, spangled with shining stars, like various gems. A golden crown of beamy fire mingled with the waving hair, and the countenance expressed more than mortal beauty and benignity.

Almira was entranced with astonishment and delight. Under this angelic figuration
it

it was some time before she recollected the features of her recent friend: but how much more lovely were they tinged with all the nobility of celestial perfection. She gazed upon her without the power of utterance, and a tear of delight swam in her eye.

Saphira motioned with her hand.—“My friend,” said she, with a smiling countenance, “such as I am you will quickly be. Prepare, Almira, nine days and you will go hence.” She waved her hand in token of friendship, and smiling, gradually faded from sight. The music floated in the air, the celestial radiance mingled with the darkness, and in a few minutes the lamp again burnt bright, and the sounds were wholly lost to the ear.

“Do I dream,” said Almira to herself, “or is this vision real? Can it be true that unembodied spirits are ever permitted to appear as a consolation, or warning to their friends: but to me! How unworthy am I of so high honour.” The solemn

mandate which had accompanied this appearance impressed her mind with belief, and she shuddered to think that with all her imperfections unrepented, and her wishes unweaned, she should so soon be summoned from the things of life. She had already been near three months in the convent, months which had passed away with the tedium of years. She received no letters from her sister, nor any visits from her father; and indeed she was ignorant whether he had returned to the castle, or whether he remained in Madrid.

The more Almira mused upon the prediction of her fate, the less able was she to determine upon its purport. The shortness of the time appeared to her to preclude accident, or the decay of her health. What accident indeed could happen to her within impenetrable walls. She was sometimes ready to interpret in a literal sense the words—*You will go hence*: but it was beyond her hope that she should be freed from the convent. She forbore mentioning

ing to Valedia the singular appearance she had witnessed.

The conversation of Valedia was happily adapted to relieve the mind from sadness. It was by turns lively or serious, and formed itself to the disposition of the hour. Her attachment to Almira seemed every moment to increase, and she frequently hinted a wish of mutual confidence.

"Is not mine," said she the second evening after the funeral of Saphira, "a singular fate? You will wonder when I tell you this place is at once my aversion and my choice."

"That is singular," replied Almira; "to me it appeared at first as a prison, but custom has so far reconciled me, that I find it possible to live. My thoughts, it is true, perpetually recur to my sister Virginia, and the gay liberties of my early youth. But why, my dear, should you make this place your choice if you were free to will otherwise?"

"Do you know I am an impostor," said Valedia with a smile: "I have pretended ignorance to you, but I am well acquainted with your connections from the mouth of my cousin Antonio de los Velos. You start, my dear, but be assured I am not dangerous. I know also the Marquis de Denia, and the adventure which introduced him to your acquaintance."

Almira, with a hesitating voice, inquired if she knew also the Marquis's friend, Fernando de Coello?

Valedia sighed deeply, and gazed upon Almira with an earnestness which seemed to seek into her thoughts. "Yes, Almira," said she, "I think—I know I may trust you. Without confidence there can be no friendship; and though a lover will divide the greatest attachments, yet when that lover is no more, the knowledge of a mutual admiration only cements affection."

"You speak to me in enigmas," said Almira.

"Then I will explain myself," returned Valedia,

Valedia, gently laying her hand upon Almira's arm. "You have been in love, my dear, so have I; but the object of our choice is for ever lost to us both, and I have here resolved to mourn away my days."

"Is Fernando dead?" murmured Almira: then breaking into tears they sunk for some time into each other's arms. "If he is dead," said Almira, recovering, "I have no longer reason to desire to live: I will take the vows with you."

"Not so," replied Valedia. "You have many reasons to desire a better fortune. The Marquis de los Velos is deeply in love with you. He is an elegant and accomplished nobleman, and such as few of our sex would refuse. I know, Almira, that your love of Fernando can be little more than inclination cherished by solitude, and thinking constantly on one object. He was in your company but very few days, while with me he passed the years of his youth. The father of Antonio was his

guardian after the death of his own parents, and I may say I loved him from the earliest hour of my memory. To an impartial eye de los Velos is preferable: and when you remember he will liberate you from this prison, place you in the most elegant circles of Madrid, and render you mistress of his actions, you will be either less or more than woman to refuse him."

"Were such an offer to be made you, would you accept it?" said Almira.

"I think that I would under the same circumstances," answered Valedia.

"But, my dear," returned Almira, wiping the tears from her eyes, "the duty I owe to my father is sacred: were I to fly from this place without his consent, I should fear some terrible judgment would overtake me."

"I see," said Valedia with a smile, "you are already initiated into the superstitions of this place: but ask yourself, if there are no bounds to this authority you dread? Can a parent have a right to imprison or to
2 destroy

destroy their offspring from wanton whim or caprice? Surely no: and as surely it is a duty incumbent on yourself to fly from such abuse of power."

Discourses like these, on repetition, gained upon the mind of Almira, which was naturally inclined to pleasure, though her late connection with Saphira had much decreased the desires of her heart. Valedia was artful, though virtuous. She had a wish to serve her cousin Antonio, and a latent desire of suppressing a rival, should Fernando ever return, which she herself distantly hoped. She painted to Almira all the gay scenes of life in which she had herself figured, and suggested so many schemes of happiness within her grasp, that Almira again began to repine at solitude, and to reflect upon the offers of Antonio.

On the following day Valedia was called to the grate, a privilege Almira was wholly denied. In about half an hour she returned, with a letter in her bosom, which she presented to Almira, saying with a smile—

"It was Antonio, as I suspected. It was with difficulty I took charge of this billet ; for had I been detected by that prying old abbess, I must never have gone to the grate again. I was afraid she would think my cousin was making love to me, he spoke so earnest and so tenderly. Seriously, my friend, if you reject him, I shall not think you a woman."

"But how can I accept the hand of a man, for whom I have no higher regard than esteem," said Almira, looking at the seal on the letter.

"That is his business," replied Valedia laughing ; "break that charm, and read the contents of the magic scroll."

The letter breathed the most ardent sentiments of love, and earnestly pressed for a favourable reply, in the name of her sister and the Marquis of Denia. He said many things to assure her he required no more than the strictest duty might approve, and strongly contrasted the prospects of felicity they might enjoy with the cold and barren employ-

employments of a monastery, to which her father condemned her for life.

These arguments could not but fall with weight upon Almira. She reflected that her cousin had never returned her attentions; he was now lost for ever; and she hesitated about the answer she should return. "Let it be a consenting negative," said Valedia. "If he should change his mind and fancy me, it would then be too late for you to repent."

"I should witness that event with pleasure," replied Almira. "If you have any wish, I will give him a final denial; for to tell you the inmost feelings of my heart, I find a sort of lingering desire after gayer scenes and worldly pleasures, yet so mingled with indifference, that I compel myself, reluctantly, to accept them. I am unable to express the compound sensation that I feel; something seems to hang upon my spirits, as if I was not my own agent; and I may compare myself to a vessel in a stream, without rudder, sail, or oar, which,
with

with the returning tide, feels an equal impulse, and follows at last the most powerful external force."

"You draw your distinctions too finely to be very happy," said Valedia. "In this life we ought never to feel too acutely either pleasure or pain; and yet for myself, I never could arrive at the dull medium, so necessary, if we would glide easily through the world; but we are now growing melancholy, when our prospects are brighter we will plan an answer to this letter, and trust the event to that superior power which controuls all things."

C H A P. IV.

Better be with the dead,
 Than on the torture of the mind to lie,
 In restless ecstasy.

ANTONIO, on the evening following the serenade, paid a visit to the Count Potenza, in hopes of being admitted into the company of Almira; when, by a display of his talents and connections, he might pique the pride of Don Padilla, and stimulate his interests into those concessions which friendship could not obtain. Great therefore was his surprise, when he arrived in the evening, to learn Almira was already become the inmate of a convent; and he could not in the first moment of his anger refrain expressions of severe resentment.

Padilla enjoyed his confusion, and answered his reproaches with defiance; indeed,

deed, so malicious were his retorts, that Antonio could easily perceive a chief trait in his character to be, a delight in the misery of others, and vowing in his own mind to surmount every opposing obstacle, he hastened to his friend the Marquis of Denia, to give utterance to the suggestions of his resentment. He found the Marquis in a melancholy disposition, seated in his library, with his head leaning upon his hand. He started at the entrance of Antonio. "You come," said he, "very opportunely to relieve me from the tortures of reflection. What it is that pursues me, I know not, but I am miserable. Sit down, my friend, and let us see if we can develop this mystery. This morning early I awoke, and, dressing myself, went down into my garden to enjoy the beauties of the cool hours. I was delighted with the chirping of the birds in the orange and almond groves, and sat down on a bank of flowers to listen to them. In a few minutes I heard a rustle amongst the laurels, and,

and, raising my eyes, beheld solemnly advancing towards me, a tall person, wrapped up to the eyes in a black cloak, instantly recalling to my mind the person who had accosted me in the church at Calatravia. I started up to call for assistance, or the better to defend myself; when, guessing my design, he motioned with his hand for my silence. Only about half the upper part of his face was visible, but the gleam of his eye was not to be mistaken.

“ He stood a moment gazing upon me with the malice of a fiend; when drawing from his cloak a letter sealed with black, I looked upon the signet, and found it my father’s seal. I started in confusion at the sight; I gazed upon the writing, and recollected the traces of his hand. My impatience and amazement were too great for me to notice, that taking advantage of my absence of mind, this strange messenger had departed; and when I again looked up, he seemed to me to have vanished. The letter was written with my father’s hand,
and

and commanded me not to undertake the journey I had meditated, but to hasten instantly to the house on the banks of the Tagus, and wait his permission for my departure. I caused the gardens to be searched when I recovered from my first surprise; but no person was to be found, and at this moment I cannot conjecture what or who is this messenger."

"Are you certain the letter is in the hand-writing of your late father?" said Antonio: "and is it not possible you may be deceived by a resemblance, and the whole be a repetition of those infamous schemes which you so narrowly escaped on your way to Toledo?"

"I am not without suspicion," replied Albert. "The disguised person, who brought me the letter, I suspect, is no other than Jacques; for surely there can be no doubt it was he who so artfully deceived me in the church. The writing might be a forgery; but the signet is what I always carry about me, and which it
would

would be no easy matter to counterfeit. How also could Padilla, or his agents, know my intended journey to the castle of Montillo, which we planned so secretly, that none of my domestics, except Raolo, can suspect it?"

"Are you certain of his fidelity?—Bribery is very powerful," said Antonio.

"I would pledge my life upon his silence," replied the Marquis, who seemed willingly to incline to the supernatural side of the question. "My curiosity impels me to comply with the order of the letter; for I am well aware that I shall have no tranquillity till I can discover who or what it is that is for ever undermining my repose. I will in future never stir without arms, and at the next interview, if my sinews do not become paralyzed, I will be certain whether I have to deal with body or spirit."

"Your love is not such as mine," replied Antonio. "I would first rescue my mistress, and then seek into those things;
but

but since you are going to quit Madrid, tell me, if you can, how I may free Almira from the convent, and by uniting her fate to mine, bid defiance to all the schemes of Padilla."

The Marquis of Denia advised him to bribe some of the monks that attended the convent, and as Don Padilla would, in a day or two, return to his castle, to be wary of discovering his design before his departure. Antonio having settled a correspondence with his friend left him, giving orders to Raolo to prepare for their journey to his country seat. He was too impatient to wait the absence of Padilla, presenting himself the same day at the grate, requesting to speak to Almira. All his address and ingenuity was not sufficient to soften the heart of the Superior. She reproached him at once with the design of interrupting the devotions of a young mind, and stirring up in the pure and holy sanctuary, of which she was governess, the profane desire of worldly pleasures; dismissing

missing him after a tedious harangue upon her own virtues and inflexible honour, with declaring that Almira never would be permitted the converse of any living person, outside the walls, except her own father, much less a young man like him, who only prowled about her fold, for the wicked purpose of carrying away one of her innocent flock.

Antonio saw that he might as well think of moving to pity the bars that prevented his entrance, as the long since cold and unfeeling heart of the abbess, and he turned gloomily away to plan some other design.

For several days he made every possible inquiry concerning those who served the convent with various articles. He applied to several of them to convey a letter; but some pleaded their conscience, and the rest declared at once, that they should run the hazard not only of losing the employ, but their characters; which in such a case would ruin them for life. Antonio next had recourse to one of the monks. He
repre-

represented to him the injustice of retaining Almira, an unwilling prisoner. He set before him the greatness of his own passion; and, above all, represented that his rank and connections would be certain to promote him in the church, and provide him a dignity he could never hope otherwise to attain.

The latter argument had considerable influence; and after several professions of regard, the monk promised him a final answer in a few days, till which he requested him to wait with patience. This interval, in the eyes of the ardent Antonio, appeared an age; but necessity required his acquiescence, and to amuse his thoughts he regularly visited the convent church, but the nuns never appeared before the curtain. He examined the situation of the building, to see if it were not possible in case of extreme urgency, to scale the frowning walls, and carry away by force the sacred charge. One part of the garden wall adjoined to several low houses, whose
tenants

tenants were of the poorer sort, and the street it opened upon was obscure and narrow. This appeared the most vulnerable part of the fortress, and overjoyed at his discovery, he hastened away, lest the presence of a man of his figure, in such a place, might create suspicion.

He returned repeatedly to reconnoitre under various disguises, every time more convinced of the practicability of his design, if he could be seconded from within.

At the appointed time he waited upon the monk ; but his reception was cold, and his denial firm. The monk now pleaded the imperious necessity of his duty ; observing, that, on cool reflection, the Marquis de los Velos would think a man ill qualified for those dignities he had the power to bestow, if he made the first step to attainment, upon the prostrate person of his sacred vows ; and that if he had not given his decided negative at first, it was from a zeal which he had to serve so deserving a nobleman.

Antonio

Antonio easily perceived that the mother Agatha had been consulted, many of the monk's phrases being the same as she herself had made use of to him. He had now to begin anew the mode of his attack: he attempted to convey a letter through the medium of some little presents from the Count Potenza; but though the presents were delivered, the suspicion of the abbess always detected the concealed billet, and Almira remained ignorant that she owed those trifles to the attention of Antonio.

The agitation which perpetual hope and perpetual disappointment created in the mind of Antonio, caused him to neglect his friend; and though he wondered the Marquis never visited Madrid, he was too much engaged to give it particular attention. He had always some new scheme to set on foot, or some new sonnet to write; for, that Almira never saw those tender effusions, he was ignorant, and as they never returned, he was sometimes inclined to hope that some at least met her eye.

Thus

Thus upwards of two months passed away; and when he calmly reflected, he found himself as near as when he first set out, and ordering his horses suddenly, he resolved to hasten to the Marquis of Denia, and engage his return, that he might assist him with his council and personal action.

His servants were some of them dispatched to get the horses ready, while others prepared his baggage. He sat in an indolent, impatient posture, looking upon the passengers in the street, and thinking of Almira, when his cousin Valedia ran into the room. Observing the disorder around him, she inquired if he was upon the point of going a journey, or only touched in his head, as the wildness of his countenance seemed to indicate.

"You are very gay, cousin," said Antonio; "but I have no spirits at present to enjoy your talent for humour."

"And why so, cousin?" said she, laughing. "I can easily guess your disease: nothing more than a love fit. Let me tell

you, love makes you would-be-wise men fools: of which I see sufficient symptoms infallibly to pronounce on your disorder."

"But though you may prognosticate ever so well," replied Antonio, "you want the skill to cure me; and so, my good Valedia, leave me."

"Leave a man in love alone to himself," returned she, "that would be an ill method of cure indeed; I should expect you had hanged or drowned yourself, or something worse."

"And what worse could happen?"

"Why, that you had scampered away on a journey, and forgot the cause of your pain."

"You are heart-whole, my pretty friend," said Antonio, "or you would not jest thus. Tell me, were *you* ever in love?—Seriously—Yes, seriously."

"Then seriously I have, but it was a great while ago." Valedia sighed.

"I will believe you now," said Antonio, taking her hand. "Come, my sweet friend,

friend, let us be mutual confidents, love is as talkative as age."

"And as foolish as dotage," said Valedia. "But I have a question to ask you: Is it long since you heard from your friend, Fernando?"

"That is a question," replied Antonio, "I know not justly how to answer. I have had no recent information, and must acknowledge I begin to fear common report for once speaks truth. But surely you are not in love with him?"

"Why not?" replied Valedia. "There can be no harm now, my secret has been long kept.—Now, cousin, tell me if I know the lady of your choice?"

"I believe you do not, and, what is worse, never will."

"How so!" cried she in surprise; "I hope she too is not dead."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Antonio: "but though not dead, she is buried from the world and from me."

“ She is in a convent then, I suppose ? ”
said Valedia.

“ You are right : but so rigorously confined, that none of her friends are allowed any communication, and all my attempts to get even a sight are in vain.”

Antonio then related the outlines of his love for Almira, and the various unsuccessful stratagems he had employed to procure admission to her presence.

When he ceased speaking, Valedia said with a smile of satisfaction : “ What will you give me if I procure you this desired interview ? Nay, more, if I bring Almira herself to your arms ? ”

“ I will give you,” cried he, pressing her hand to his lips, “ any thing you can require short of my heart, and acknowledge that the invention of your sex exceeds the boasted stratagems of ours.”

“ That will be acknowledging what all the world allows,” replied Valedia. “ But it is not said we are always as disinterested

as

as cunning ; and there are not many examples of so fair a damsel as I, running hazard to promote the love of a cavalier young as you. I will therefore be content with the praise due to the act."

" Then now let us come to the design," said Antonio, who had little expectation her proposal was serious ; and his surprise was great when she thus began to explain her intention.

" I have weighed in my own mind the several attempts you have made, and the chief difficulty appears to me to gain admission into the convent. To overcome this I will become a boarder, which will enable me to carry on any correspondence. I will endeavour to acquire the friendship of Almira, and to promote your interests in her favour. What will be more easy than the accomplishment of this design ; we can arrange our schemes unsuspected ; my quality will give me respect, and I have no doubt we shall shortly effect the escape of your mistress."

Antonio was enraptured at this plan, which, with discretion, seemed incapable of failure; and embracing his cousin, he committed to her care the promotion of his suit. His intended journey was countermanded; and while Valedia went to prepare for her removal, and to engage a lady of rank to speak to the abbess about her admission, he sat down to write to the Marquis his new, and, as he considered, infallible scheme.

The intention of Valedia was no surprise to her friends, who had observed the frequent fits of melancholy which possessed her when she thought upon the faded prospects of her younger years, when she had fondly hung upon the words of Fernando, and secretly imbibed the most subtle of human passions. The recommendation of her aunt was not to be rejected, and St. Agatha admitted her as a boarder, with no little pride at the distinction such a choice conferred upon her house. How easily Valedia gained the confidence of Almira
has

has already been seen, and the effects of her constant discourses were not to be doubted.

Antonio conveyed through the hands of his cousin repeated letters, and invitations the most flattering to every feeling of the human heart. He was not long content with the reception of her answers: he requested she would meet him on the second night from the date of his letter at the bottom of the garden, where it was next to impossible they could be interrupted, and where he hoped to convince her personally of his sincerity and intentions.

It was not without many reflections, and much entreaty from Valedia, that she consented with a reluctant heart to this clandestine proceeding: but it was absolutely necessary, if she intended ever to quit the convent. The strange and fearful prediction of Saphira ever stood before her, alarming her mind with doubt and timidity. She repeated again and again the engage-

ment, and the foreboding of evil sunk her into deep dejection.

In vain she attempted to reason away the oppression of her spirits, and to impute the whole to the high tone of her imagination and feverish spirits. She numbered up the days which were passed, and she started with dread when she remembered that the appointed night was the *ninth* since the prediction of the angelic vision.

"Surely," said she, "some mysterious fate hangs over me, and the moments advance which are to carry me to the arms of my heavenly friend. I must not, cannot meet this Antonio. I will excuse myself, and wait in my cell the fatal hour. Alas! were I to be overtaken by death in the very act of outraging my duty, what could excuse my remissness and folly."

Such were the reasonings of Almira, whose agitated mind deprived her of rest, and enervated her frame with that languor of indifference which prefers ease to opposition.

Valedia,

Valedia, who knew not her friend's secret reasons for apprehending the event of the approaching night, wondered at the fears she expressed, endeavouring to raise her spirits, and to keep her firm to the appointment.

"If," said Almira, "I am to meet my fate on the ensuing night; if it is true that *I shall go hence*, it is indifferent whether I remain in my room or the garden."

Valedia did not comprehend the full meaning of this sentence, and replied, "I hope Antonio will have prepared the means of conveying you hence."

"Perhaps," said Almira, with a mournful sigh, "the conveyance will be satisfaction to none of us."

Antonio, who knew not whether he should again have the opportunity of a personal interview, resolved in his own mind that this should be decisive, if he could possibly prevail on Almira to seize the moment before them. He had arranged his plan, having a conveyance in wait-

ing within the area of his own palace, giving out that he should early the next day pay a visit to the Marquis of Denia. He feared making any preparations near the convent, lest he should be counteracted by some spy belonging to Padilla.

Antonio was returning to his palace about noon of the eventful day. He walked slowly along the street meditating on his project, when he was suddenly accosted by the Marquis of Denia, covered with dust, and in extreme agitation. His countenance wore all the marks of surprise, grief, horror, and perturbation. He walked extremely fast, and hurrying Antonio along, led him through the bye streets to his palace, preserving silence the whole way to any questions suggested by the wondering Antonio.

The moment the Marquis had shut the door of his library, he threw himself into a chair, exclaiming—"Pity me, my friend, you see before you this day one of the most miserable of men, and that by a means
which

which should have made him the most happy. Wretch that I am, I have murdered my own hopes, and blasted for ever the good fortune Heaven had designed me. Oh!" cried he, starting up, "I shall go raving mad: my hands have been steeped in the blood of Virginia, and perhaps at this instant she breathes her last. Oh Heavens, Antonio! (and the tears burst from his eyes) that I should live to lament such an action; that by my hands the fairest beauty of Nature's forming should be thus destroyed."

"Be calm, my dear friend," said De los Velos, when the Marquis paused. "What do you lead me to think from these incoherent expressions?—What is it you say?"

"That I have murdered Virginia, the darling of my heart, the object of my soul's doating!"

"Impossible," cried Antonio, "you surely dream."

"No, no, no," cried the Marquis wildly. "Oh, that it were a dream! Many

horrible dreams I have had, but this reality is worse than them all.—Look at this crimson sword, stained with the purest blood that ever flowed from the heart of innocence. O! Great Heaven pity me!”

The Marquis dropped his sword upon the ground, and clasped his hands together in an agony of grief. Antonio beheld stains of blood upon the glittering blade, and shuddered as he took it up. “What strange occurrence could have impelled you to such an action,” said he; “and where did it take place? Have you been to rescue her from the castle, and was this done in defending her from her father?”

“No,” replied the Marquis gloomily, and starting at the horrible remembrance; “it was beneath my own roof: but now I have not a moment to tell you how. I left her pale and faint, life wavering on her lips. I have ridden post for a surgeon—I expect one every moment, when I must return. I must be calm, Antonio, to warn you against some mischief. I have been

at

at your palace to find you, and I met the Count Potenza. He informs me that Don Padilla arrived at his house last night: he has dispatched an hundred spies to bring him information of our proceedings. I expect a visit; but now—now I am prepared for any thing that can happen to myself. But take care—your steps are watched, and your visits round the convent a public talk. Don Padilla is not a man to trifle. I have ten thousand things to say, and not one moment to say them. If you will enter my chaise with the surgeon, who I see coming, I will explain myself more.”

“Excuse me, I entreat,” said Antonio, “great as is my curiosity, and much as is my astonishment and grief at what you tell me, I would not for worlds be absent this night from Madrid.”

“Beware,” said the Marquis, “that your presence do not cost you dear, and remember me.”

The surgeon was now announced—and embracing Antonio, the Marquis of Denia entered

entered the chaise, which drove off with all the speed the horses could exert, leaving his friend wrapped in wonder and doubt, which no reasoning could dispel or resolve. What dreadful accident had happened to Virginia he could only guess; and what way he should avoid the vigilance of Don Padilla he had yet to determine.



CHAP. V.

Hail! I come

To answer thy best pleasure : be't to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire : to ride
On the curled clouds : to thy strong bidding, task
Ariel, and all his qualities.

TEMPEST.

WHEN the Marquis of Denia quitted Madrid, at the reception of that singular command, which he fancied himself necessitated to obey, he took up his residence at his country seat, resolved to await an interview which he expected from this mischievous character in disguise, whom he strongly suspected to be Jacques; though how a letter of his father's, bearing indeed no date, should have come into his hands, he

he was unable to determine, and wished to unravel.

To bar against secret assassination, he had the lower apartments of his house secured. He blocked up the doors adjoining the rooms he himself inhabited, leaving only two narrow passages open, and never went abroad unarmed, or unattended by Raolo, though it were only into his own gardens. Thus he fancied he had provided against any surprise, or human effort.

One week passed away and he received no farther interruption. On the second, his mind was disturbed by an incident, which, though in itself within the bounds of natural events, yet being so timed, struck him as another effort of the same malice which had destroyed his peace, by loading his mind with fanciful horrors. The gardens before his house were adorned with innumerable flowers, and the fruits were ripening upon the branches. He had remarked in the evening, as he walked with Raolo, the singular beauty displayed by the
vegetable

vegetable creation; and the next morning, when he looked abroad, all that beauty was withered, and the fruit dried up upon the branches, as by a blast from a noxious gale.

The weather was not remarkably hot, and the fire-wind was never known to blow in this part of Spain; and while the Marquis wondered at so singular an event, he silently imputed it to the same power which had overturned near one quarter of the building by a sudden whirlwind.

The servants beheld the blight as an omen of some great misfortune; and it was even whispered amongst them that their lord would soon be snatched away by death, which would thus destroy him before his time as the blasted fruits of his garden.

A month passed away, and the Marquis began to find rest from his troubled fancy. His library attracted the chief of his attention, and he sought in two most opposite studies to prepare himself for any fate that might await him.

He

He read over all the books of devotion which attracted him, to confirm himself in reliance upon Providence ; and he perused several books of magic, to discover, if possible, how far infernal spirits were permitted to act upon men : being in his own mind convinced, from the whole chain of events he had been engaged in from his leaving the Castle of Montillo, that such was his unfortunate situation.

He was one day sitting musing on these subjects, till his mind was ready to start from the picture itself pourtrayed : it was noon, and the servants were taking their repose. The day was hot, and the Marquis sat dressed in a loose gown in his study, when the door slowly opened, without any notice, as from a servant.

The Marquis arose at the unexpected opening of the door, and advanced towards it : but he started back with sudden dismay at beholding, for the third time, the same figure of a man wrapped in a long old Spanish black cloak, which enveloped the
whole

whole person but the upper part of a dark and murderous countenance.

He had never beheld this being without remembering the similarity of the appearance to the phantom he had seen in his dream, when he seemed separated from Virginia for ever, and precipitated down from the sky : and though in his cool moments he always believed it no other than the assassin Jacques, yet it never stood before him by surprise ; but he for the moment trembled with fear.

His eyes were fiery and wild, his brows were knit together, and he sternly gazed upon the Marquis without uttering a word. In vain the Marquis thought upon his pistols, which lay upon a side-table ; he had not even power to speak. " Spirits," thought the Marquis, " are said to love the mantle of night ; but this comes upon me at noon-day, when the heats are at the highest, wrapped in the shade of his own garments, and dark alone in his own countenance."

The

The figure pointed to the open door, and the Marquis ventured to point to a chair, making signs that the business might as well be finished there as elsewhere.

The stranger, with a motion quick as lightning, drew a dagger from the foldings of his cloak, and waving it in the air, again sternly made a sign that he would be obeyed, and with a rapid stride pointed the dagger within a foot of the Marquis's throat.

Whether this being were human or no, the Marquis had neither power nor means of resistance. He might be murdered with the same facility in his own chamber, as in a more secluded place; and he resolved in his mind no longer to shrink from whatever fate he had to encounter. Once resolved, the firmness of his native courage strengthened his joints, and making a sign that he would obey, the stranger moved forward to the door, followed by the Marquis, within the reach of the arm which held up the dagger ready to plunge it in his breast.

In

In this situation they proceeded along the back stairs into that range of apartments the late Marquis had occupied, and which his son forbore to reside in from the melancholy reflections they excited. They entered at last a room on the ground floor, which had been the study, and was surrounded with curious cabinets, containing papers written by the old Marquis. In the centre of the floor Albert perceived a trap-door open, presenting a deep chasm, down which a pair of stairs led into some dark labyrinth or dungeon, of which he had never had the slightest knowledge till this moment.

Astonished at this singular circumstance, he looked upon his guide with increasing apprehension; yet he feared to betray his want of confidence, when a motion might in a moment number him with the dead. The stranger began to descend the gulf. The Marquis cast his eyes down the gloomy cavity, into which he shuddered to enter, turning pale; when the fearful guide, frowning
ing

ing fiercely, and shaking his dagger, glanced upon him a look of vengeance.

The dreadful darkness of this dismal place struck him with the deepest horror as he descended the steps, every moment expecting to plunge into an unfathomable depth, from which he was only assured by the heavy and solemn paces of his unpitying guide. About thirty steps brought them to a firm landing, and the faint gleam of a distant torch cast a dismal shade, without serving to illumine or chase the surrounding darkness.

The Marquis continued to follow, over ground which was soft like new-turned mould beneath his feet, every moment expecting to be terrified by some tale of murder, transfixed by some frightful appearance, or stretched upon the ground by an unseen blow of the uplifted dagger.

The stranger moved forward without uttering a sound; for their feet made no noise that echo could return: every thing around was profoundly and fearfully still,
the

the Marquis scarce dared respire, in painful expectance of what or where would be the termination of this scene.

Being arrived within a few paces of the torch, which was stuck into the ground, the Marquis perceived part of the ground newly removed, and an opening of about two feet deep in form of a grave, a spade standing beside it. The strange guide suddenly paused.

“Now,” cried he, in a voice almost choaking with the exultation of demonical triumph, “now, Albert de Denia, is thy last moment come. Thou can’st not escape. Thou art deep in the bowels of the earth, and when thou hast finished thy grave, thou shalt die.’

The stranger let fall the foldings of the garment which enveloped his face; the glare of the red torch fell full upon it, and presented to the Marquis the savage countenance and murderous lineaments of Jacques, as he appeared on the night
when

when he entered his chamber with the lamp and dagger in the Castle of Montillo.

The Marquis shuddered with surprise : he repented, but he repented too late, having followed into such a place alone and unarmed ; for at that hour of the day, and in that situation of fancied security, he had not even his sword ; and he found himself wholly in the power of a wretch, who had the double motive of revenge and personal security to urge him to murder. He read all these thoughts in his countenance as he stood with his arm extended in the air, and smiled at once contempt and pleasure. He made a motion with his arm as if going to strike, and the Marquis shrunk back half a pace. The black cloak, which was loosely fastened, partly fell back ; and the Marquis, in place of the glowing skeleton he had seen in his dream, beheld a corselet of steel, which caution had provided against unforeseen resistance. The Marquis now

gave himself up as certainly lost. The villain read his power, and, with a voice of raillery, said :

“ Who didst thou take me for, Marquis, a sprite, or a wandering ghost? Thou wilt find my arm something stronger than either, I trust. Now thy curiosity is satisfied. It was I who met thee in the church at Calatravia : it was I who delivered thee a forged letter to conduct you into my snare ; and now you are caught, nor shall all the fiends in hell free thee from this arm. Thinkest thou, Marquis, that grave is deep enough?”

“ Is it as deep,” cried the Marquis, resolute from desperation, “ is it as deep, thou murderer, as that in which you placed the body of Count Ferendez?”

The eyes of Jacques became livid with rage. “ Wretch,” cried he, “ take that spade, dig your own grave, and when it is finished I will pour thy blood into it, and cover thee up to rot. Dare you disobey !

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H

this

this dagger shall find a grave in your carcase."

Every moment's delay was precious; the Marquis had no means of resistance, and taking the spade he began to dig, while Jacques, uttering all the suggestions of his bloody wit, stood over with the dagger. The Marquis had time for a moment's reflection, and that supplied him with a desperate resolution.

The earth he turned up was soft, and he threw it on one side, Jacques standing on the other with his face rather inclined over the grave, the better to strike in case the Marquis should attempt to escape. In this situation the Marquis, with a sudden turn of his hand, threw a spade full of earth into the face of Jacques, which confounded the ruffian for a moment, and allowed Albert time to leap on the opposite side of the grave, where the torch stood burning.

The Marquis caught up the torch, and darting forward at Jacques, set his black garment

garment in a flame before he had time to parry the unexpected attack. With the sharp edge of his dagger Jacques cut the torch in two at one stroke, the flaming piece falling into the grave flashing with partial gleams from the bottom, and emitting a volume of smoke as from the mouth of a fiery furnace.

"Behold the grave," cried the Marquis, "in which one of us is to lay. Prepare, wretch, to account for all thy crimes." Jacques appeared as a dæmon of destruction, fighting in flames and smoke. His upper garment burnt quickly away, but his armour defended his body. He made furiously at the Marquis, who with difficulty could ward his attack with the spade, against the blows of which his corselet was a complete shield.

The Marquis slackened his attack, in order to watch some opportunity when he might take advantage of an unguarded attitude ; and waiting till another flash of the torch gave them light for a moment,

he darted so well-aimed a blow upon the head of his powerful antagonist, that he staggered and fell upon the edge of the grave. The Marquis followed his success, and before he had power to rise, gave him so many blows over the head, notwithstanding all the efforts of Jacques to ward them with his dagger, that he was deprived of sensation.

The Marquis prepared to roll him into the grave, with intent to fill up the earth upon him, when he was startled by a light motion behind him; and looking up, beheld a figure, which in his agitated state of mind attracted all his attention, and riveted him to the earth.

A female form moved across the subterraneous vault habited in Moorish robes, with a black veil descending to her feet. Round her head, and amongst her hair, a band of red flame seemed to play, serving at once to render her person visible, and light her steps through these dreary mansions of melancholy silence; at the same time

time that it added to the hideousness of her appearance by its uncertain motion.

In her right hand she held a silver spear, the top of which was pointed with a green, yet clear light, and in her left-hand she carried a human skull. Her arms to the shoulders, and her legs to the knees, were without cover, and she appeared as a fiend from the infernal realms of vengeance.

The Marquis was near sinking upon the ground as he gazed upon this figure. He supported himself leaning upon the spade while she moved slowly before him. "Possibly," thought he, "this is some wandering spirit of darkness; or an enchantress, who, in these dreary vaults, performs the tremendous rites of her incantations."

Her Moorish garb first gave rise to this suggestion, no people studying the art of magic with more avidity; and as this idea gained ground in his mind, his fears became less, and his curiosity stronger. "I will witness," thought he, "this horrid act, that I may be convinced if its powers are

real, or its performance so impious as we are taught to believe."

The figure moved onward with a majestic motion. The Marquis cautiously followed till the turning of the vaults led into a spacious dome, in appearance the excavation of an hill.

The eye in vain endeavoured to penetrate the thick and almost tangible darkness; the sides of this subterraneous temple being earth of different strata, which emitting no reflection, the fancy was led to wander through a boundless void.

The Marquis stood still, resting against the side near the entrance, awaiting the event, and totally forgetful of his late encounter.

The enchantress advanced nearly to the centre, where standing still, she placed the skull upon the ground, and stepping upon it with her bare feet, she stood for some moments without motion, as if muttering an invocation; but her black veil concealed her countenance. She then extended

tended the point of the spear which was tipped with flame, describing a circle upon the earth; from whence arose, as she traced, a line of pale-green flame, emitting a singular smell, but without smoke, till it encompassed her round.

With her left-hand she threw back her veil, exhibiting a pale and livid complexion, marked with a strong trait of frenzy, to which her darting eye added increase of wildness.

“ Surely,” thought the Marquis, “ I have seen those features. It must be the same that I beheld in the chamber at the Castle of Montillo, and this is a continuation of the horrors that then chilled my blood.”—His reflections were suspended in painful expectation of what he had yet to witness. The enchantress standing upon the skull, began to turn and throw herself into every gesture madness might have dictated. She seemed in the eyes of the Marquis as one of the ancient furies.

The mystic dance being ended, she step-

ped down upon the ground, and turning the hollow of the skull, she took from her girdle a phial, the contents of which she poured into the cavity, and touching it with the point of her burning spear, a strong and bright flame arose amidst clouds of snow-coloured smoke, that circled in festoons over her head, and formed an undulating canopy around her. She read her incantations from a little book, which she took from her breast, and which was written with human blood upon parchment made of a murderer's skin, while the flame and clouds continued to arise, and a strong yet pleasant perfume pervaded the place.

The bright clouds waved in spiral wreaths to the top of the dome, where meeting resistance they turned, dropping to the ground in forms that delighted the eye, and settling upon the outside of the circle, completely enveloped the enchantress in a temple of transparent and dazzling brightness; while the increasing flame within appeared as a body of compressed fire, in the
midst

midst of which, wrapped in gloomy frenzy, stood the authorefs of the fcene.

The Marquis remained without daring to move. A burning heat pervaded every part around him, and a fenfe of fuffocation arofe in his breaft; but yet he was unwilling to quit fo ftrange a fight without awaiting the crisis; while his lips trembled incapable of uttering a found, and he pronounced mentally a prayer to Heaven, whole protection he felt was moft needful in this tremendous fituation.

The enchantrefs continued to utter her infamous fells, when fuddenly fhe ceafed, being, as it were, tranfixed with fome diftant fight of horror. Her eyes were fretched to behold it, her features were extended and convulfed, and feen as fhe was furrounded with a green-coloured flame, her ghafly viſage became a picture of corrupted death.

“He comes! He comes!” fcreamed fhe in a voice of the utmoft terror. “He comes in anger!”

The arched festoons of moving vapour dissolved in a shower of blood ; a hollow sound echoed along the distant avenues, and flashes of purple and sapphire-coloured light darted round every part of the dome. A strong wind of sulphureous vapour almost annihilated respiration, and howled with dismal moaning as it rushed through the cavern. The Marquis would have raised his hand to his mouth to prevent suffocation, but his muscles refused to bend, and he found it impossible to make either motion or sound.

Repeated thunders, like a thousand artillery, reverberated and shook the bowels of the earth: a loud strain of military music broke the air, and a figure of gigantic stature entered the dome. His height was superior to the sons of men, and his face declared him a being of immortal form. He leaned upon a rod of burning steel, a girdle of fire burnt round his waist, and his feet were clothed in glowing brass. His wings, which he partly extended, glittered
in

in all the shadings of an ever-varying rainbow, and on his head was a black helmet, over which waved a plume of condensed clouds, adding to that pride and impious arrogance which sat upon and shaded every feature of a countenance, which neither mortal pen nor mortal fancy can describe.

His rapid eyes shot like the glancing lightning a thousand ways at once, with a penetration that pierced through the solid earth, and scanned at once the secrets of nature. The Marquis endeavoured to turn himself from the keen gaze of this immortal being, but he was rivetted to the spot. His whole frame seemed disorganized and dissolving before his frown, and he could only utter a short ejaculation to Heaven before his nerves relaxed, and he sunk senseless upon the ground.

When returning life again awakened his senses, and strength slowly braced his frame, he found himself involved in total darkness, and it was long before he retraced upon his memory all the chain of incidents

which had conducted him thither. It was with difficulty he could persuade himself that he had not been in a frightful dream; but the deep and impervious darkness convinced him that he yet had to find the clue to this subterraneous labyrinth, of which, till this adventure, he had never had the smallest knowledge, and now was almost tempted to believe the fabrication of magic.

He arose with difficulty, and groping his way along the sides of the passages, he hoped to find again the stair down which he had descended, if indeed it had any real existence: for so much had the scenes he had witnessed shaken the powers of his reason, that he ceased to pursue the dictates of cool reflection.

His weakness allowed him to proceed but slowly, and he trembled lest in this incapacitated state he might be again attacked, it being more than probable that Jacques had recovered, and might at that moment be lurking in the obscure recesses, or laying
wait

wait for him in the narrow passages, where the lowness of the hanging earth obliged him to stoop. Slowly he proceeded, now resting to recover strength, or pausing when fancy created the alarm.

Almost despairing of ever being able to free himself from this entangled and dark abode, he wandered for more than an hour, till he was nearly exhausted, when he perceived a faint light at a distance like the glimmer of a star through a fog. Fear and hope agitated his breast as he cautiously advanced, till he could perceive a female stooping to the ground, and seemingly administering to some person in distress.

The Marquis made no doubt but it was the forcerefs endeavouring to recall to life the assassin Jacques, and a damp sweat gathered on his brow at again beholding that fiend in female form, to whose incantations he imputed all the mischances which had befallen himself.

How to escape unseen he knew not, but to be discovered he knew would be destruction;

struſion; and he wondered in his own mind how ſhe had overlooked him, and ſuffered him to eſcape when his ſenſes were wrapped in oblivion.

To remain where he was equalled the danger of proceeding, and he hoped through the dim obſcurity he might eſcape unſeen. The hope was vain.—The ſorcerers immediately remarked his preſence, and ſtarting from the ſide of the grave, ſhe purſued him; for at her firſt motion the Marquis exerted his ſpeed towards the ſtairs, whoſe ſituation were direct from this ſpot.

“Thinkeſt thou to eſcape *me*,” cried ſhe, as ſhe advanced; “though thou haſt ſlipped from the arm of a man, though thou haſt eſcaped all my charms, and broken the ſlumber of a powerful ſpell, in the name of Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, I arreſt thy flight, and ſcatter blindneſs in thy path.”

The Marquis, at theſe powerful words, found his feet ſuddenly grow to the earth, and clouds of confuſion ſwim before his
fight;

fight; yet his senses remained, and his tongue was free. He had heard the words of the enchantress, and, without other design than reply, he cried aloud: "Wretch, slave to the Prince of Wickedness, thy power cannot equal the Almighty; and Him whom thou tremblest to name will not suffer that any of his creatures who fear him should perish by thy damning arts. In his name I charge thee to restore me." The Marquis crossed himself, and bowed his head towards the ground. The influence of the incantation ceased, the film passed away from his sight, and he found himself standing alone at the foot of the stairs, up which he hastened into his late father's library, where he almost swooned away with the excess of joy that he again breathed an untainted air, and beheld the glorious beams of the rising sun.

The Marquis retired immediately to bed, after a slight refreshment; but his sleep was broken by unconnected and strange images wandering through quagmires, or
licking

sticking between closing rocks in subterraneous passages. Thus he received no refreshment from sleep, and when he awoke he found a feverish heat and universal lassitude hanging over him. He saw no termination to that chain of vexations which, for the last twelve months, had interrupted all happiness: and while Jacques and this enchantress had power to harass him, he could never expect to be the certain master of an hour.

The Marquis wished to confide in his servant Raolo the discovery he had made of this extensive cavern, and to explore with him its secret recesses: but he was unwilling to enter into a long and necessary explanation, and he sighed for his friend Fernando, whose fate appeared to him but too certain.

Antonio was too much occupied with his own passion to leave Madrid, and the Marquis resolved, as soon as his health in any degree recovered, to hasten to that city, and aid him in attaining the liberty of Almira.

The

The mystery of his father's letter he could explain, when so free an access could be had to copies of his father's hand, and most likely to some duplicate signet. Who the female could be he had no conception. Strange suspicions filled his mind, as he remembered the incidents that had happened in the Castle of Montillo, and he had little doubt but she was the same whom his friend Fernando had seen rise from a grave in the vaults of the chapel. Her business seemed with the dead in the bowels of the earth, and her character appeared to him too terrible to be human.

Near a fortnight elapsed before the Marquis was sufficiently recovered to leave his room, and he proposed in a few days to go to Madrid. Meanwhile, to prevent another surprise, he gave Raolo in charge to guard against the entrance of strangers, and to fly instantly to his library when he should ring his bell.

A fixed melancholy again settled upon his mind, and his thoughts were of the most gloomy

gloomy shadings. The evening of a very fine day set in with a heavy storm, and the Marquis, who now expected ill in every change of the elements, went to his window to gaze upon the lowering sky; not without some apprehension that another side of his house might be scattered over the grounds.

He remained a long time at the window, listening to the awful rolling of the thunder, and watching the sporting of the subtle lightning, till his mind was almost overpowered with its own thoughts. He wondered Raolo had not called him to supper, when he saw by his watch it was near eleven o'clock, and taking a taper in his hand, he advanced to the supper room.

He opened the door: a female sprang forwards to meet him, her dress in confusion. The taper fell from his hand, as the idea of the enchantress flashed upon him, and her action confirming him that she had a design to assassinate him, he unsheathed his sword in a moment, and thrusting

thrusting forward the point, the stranger ran upon it, and murmuring out his name, fell bleeding upon the floor.

His arm was arrested, but too late, by his servant Raolo ; and old Gonzalez, uttering cries of despair, ran to raise the fallen Virginia. The Marquis gazed a moment, too much confounded at first to understand all the horrors of the deed. He gazed eagerly upon her face as it became pale, and clasping his hands in an agony, remained for a time wholly speechless. Recovering from this stupor, he heaved a deep sigh. “ Is it then,” cried he, “ no deception? Have I murdered thee, my Virginia? Oh Heaven! why was this?”

He sunk down beside her, and pressing her in his arms, endeavoured to recover her from the insensibility which bound up her senses.

The old man tore his white locks in despair, and not knowing clearly how the accident had happened, his complaints pierced the heart of the Marquis with the acutest distress.

Raolo

Raolo was the only person who retained any presence of mind : he called for the housekeeper, Dame Bertha, and ran himself for a restorative.

Virginia after a time opened her eyes : those heavenly eyes, on which the Marquis would have gazed with rapture, now seemed to reproach him with the most barbarous cruelty ; and it was more from not recollecting that he had the power to die, than that life was sacred, that he did not sheathe the fatal sword in his own heart.

His grief was too deep to find utterance in words, and holding her hand in his, and gazing upon her pale yet lovely features, he supported her while the housekeeper cut away part of her dress, and examined the wound, which was slighter than the effusion of blood had given occasion to fear.

A faint gleam of hope dawned upon the soul of the Marquis. He who had sat almost motionless as a statue, lest the smallest stir might warn the spirit of his beloved to take its flight, now recovered all the energy
which

which dwelt within him. He desired the maids to carry her carefully to bed; and Dame Bertha, who had from her youth been accustomed to all the accidents of a large family, and possibly knew as much as half the physicians in Madrid, compounded a cooling draught, and desired that she should not be disturbed till the arrival of the surgeon.

The Marquis remained near till he supposed the first shock of her spirits was subsided, and fearing Raolo would not fly with the same diligence as himself, he set out before day for Madrid, totally forgetful of the danger he himself might run, and totally regardless of all things but the recovery of Virginia.

At Madrid, while he was seeking the surgeon and Antonio, accident threw him in the way of Count Potenza, who, in an hurried manner, related the arrival of Don Padilla, and the means he had employed to trace the designs of himself and Antonio. He readily imputed the presence of
Padilla

Padilla to the absence of his daughter, with the old steward: but however much he himself was surprised, he had not had a moment's leisure to inquire into the reasons that could have conducted to that flight.

C H A P. VI.

'Twas but a dream,
 But then so terrible, it shakes my soul :
 Cold drops of sweat hang on my trembling flesh ;
 My blood grows chilly, and I freeze with horror :
 Oh, tyrant conscience ! how dost thou afflict me ?
 When I look back, 'tis terrible retreating :
 I cannot bear the thought, nor dare repent :
 I am but man, and Fate do thou dispose me.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the Marquis and the surgeon arrived, they found Virginia resigned to the event, whatever that might be ; a tone of mind advantageous to a dangerous operation, and from which the surgeon augured the best effects. The wound, on probing, was found slight in comparison with the fears of the Marquis, and he attended her bedside with the assiduity of a man

man whose existence depended on the event. His attentions could not but be grateful to the suffering maid, and she was in her mind almost ready to thank the accident which called forth so much tenderness and unequivocal regard.

So sweet a train of thought stole over her mind, that her spirits were tranquillized into a gentle slumber, and she appeared free from fever. The Marquis hailed the happy omen with delight, and taking Gonzalez into another apartment, he inquired the motives that had induced their flight from the Castle of Montillo.

“The reasons,” answered the old man, “are most strange and most singular; they almost bewilder my poor old head, and turn me giddy with the recollection. You doubtless remember, Senor, all the fearful omens relating to the castle. Ah! Many a foul deed has blackened its black walls. All those noises and warnings are not for nothing. I have often thought old Padilla carried his character written upon his brows.”

“Well,

"Well, my dear Gonzalez," said the Marquis, "tell me in method what you have to say. I fear Virginia may awake."

"I have a very long tale to tell," replied he, "and I fear my way may seem tedious. You had better first, if you please, order a log of wood on the fire. I always think a chearful blaze gives me courage, and dispels gloomy apprehension."

The Marquis complied, and the old man began.

"Your Excellenza must remember your visit to the picture-room, when Don Padilla returned so unexpectedly. You must also remember the interruption we met with when I was relating to you the story of his Excellenza's two wives. Well, whoever or whatever it was that overheard us, it was not long before it reached Don Padilla. I must own I thought my life no very secure under his roof; he never spoke to me about any business; and if I happened to meet him, he scowled at me as though he would have sunk me with a

frown. I was ignorant, Senor, till after the escape of your servant Raolo, that he had made an attempt to speak to the ladies: but Padilla imputed to me the design, which was discovered by his finding the letter on the toilet of Lady Almira; for ever since the arrival of that stranger, whom nobody knew, and who forbid his marriage at the very altar, he had been more than curious in visiting the ladies' apartments, as though he suspected them of a design to betray him."

"Do you know nothing who that stranger was?" said the Marquis. "Did you see him, or hear his business?"

"I saw him, and I partly heard him, but not clearly from the confusion. I must go back in my tale to tell you, that Don Padilla took his journey to Grenada this year earlier than usual. When he had been gone about a week I received a letter, ordering me to see the best rooms put in order, and the little chapel arranged, for that he was going to bring down a lady, who,

who, from motives of delicacy, wished the ceremony to be private. Indeed, poor soul, she rather wished it should not be at all ; but the Count D'Osoño, her father, was gained by the riches of Padilla, and she was obliged to obey.

“ Well, a long train of servants attended the Count and his daughter, and our castle was full of guests. I did not wonder in my own mind at the determination of Don Padilla, because I knew his greatest desire was for an heir, and I knew also that he was not to be restrained when his passions were on fire. The morning of the ceremony came. Lady Altamira appeared amidst her maids, dressed in all the elegance of fancy ; jewels sparkled in her hair : her figure was really fine, and her flowing robe increased the majesty of her motions.

“ Virginia was dressed in the Castilian habit of a light azure mounted with silver, and her sister Almira in a light pink. They looked more pleased than the bride, as they walked up the aisle ; and when the

rays of the painted window fell upon the face of Virginia, I thought I never beheld her more lovely. She reminded me of the picture of her mother that evening, when, if you remember, the sinking sun shed its beams on her countenance."

The Marquis sighed deeply, and Gonzalez continued his description of the dresses and order of procession unattended to, till the Marquis was roused by the words which followed. "The company had already taken their places before the altar, and the priest had begun the ceremony, when we all turned round on a sudden noise at the door like the struggles of a person for entrance.

"I fixed my eye upon Don Padilla, whose countenance changed as if his mind already foreboded what would ensue. The priest stood without speaking, and the whole company turned round to the door, where a stranger forcing his way through the servants, advanced slowly up the chapel.

"He

“ He wore a mask upon his face ; he was dressed in the Moorish habit. In his left-hand he held a letter, and his right-hand was placed upon the hilt of his sword.

“ I expected a repetition of a similar scene to that I had witnessed on the nuptials of Lady Zidana ; and if I could penetrate the thoughts of others, they were not much different. The proud stranger made no obeisance to the company, but advancing before the altar, presented Don Padilla the letter he held in his left-hand.

“ When Don Padilla fixed his eye upon the writing, his countenance became of a livid hue, and his teeth chattered with perturbation. He was some time before he could collect a reply. ‘ If,’ said he, ‘ the earth can yield up its inhabitants, and the sea give back its dead, then may this be.’

“ The stranger slowly raised his mask. Don Padilla gazed upon him with a fearful frown, and clapping his hand upon his sword, stood in a posture of defence. The stranger smiled contemptuously, and closing

down his mask, solemnly walked out of the chapel, and mounting a courser which stood in the court-yard, rode away, before Padilla had presence of mind to command his servants to stop him.

“ When Padilla recovered himself, he would have had the ceremony proceed ; but the Count replied : ‘ You will pardon me there. After an interruption mysterious as this, I must have further explanation before I give the hand of my daughter.’

“ ‘ What do you desire ?’ said Padilla.

“ ‘ That letter,’ replied the Count.

“ ‘ That letter is to me,’ answered Padilla, reddening with anger.

“ ‘ And my daughter is to me,’ returned the Count.

“ ‘ And shall never be to me,’ cried Padilla, turning away in wrath. ‘ By the depths of hell I would sooner marry the skeletons of my first wives than the daughter of such a man.’

“ ‘ This is a solemn place to make such
an

an appeal,' replied the Count coolly, and pointing to the altar, 'there are witnesses, perhaps, unseen who have heard it.'

"Padilla looked round him with a stare of horror. The Count took the hand of his daughter, who stood pale and speechless, and led her away with an air of defiance that deprived Padilla of an answer.

"From that hour Don Padilla did not quit the castle. He appeared jealous of all around him, and suspicious of his own thought. I observed that, when in company with his daughters, he gazed frequently upon Virginia with an eagerness I had no guide to explain. To me he was particularly reserved; but when he discovered the schemes of Raolo, by unfortunately finding the letter, his fury broke forth upon me in violence.

"I was sitting in my little room—you know the little grey chamber where I used to live, Senor—I was sitting there, and musing over old stories, and wondering in

my mind who the stranger could have been, when Don Padilla entered in a tremendous fury, the letter of Raolo crumpled in one hand, and his sword drawn in the other. 'Villain,' cried he, stamping on the ground so loud, that the noise he made echoed along the hollow building: 'Villain, traitor, do I feed you, and maintain you here, that you may sting me to death? Is it you, old dotard, who are become the pander of profligate rakes. But thou shalt die; short is thy time to live.'

"With that he seized me by the hair of my head, and dashed me on the ground. I implored his compassion on my years and services, and pleaded my innocence and ignorance of what he alluded to.

" 'Thou liest, traitor,' cried he in a frenzy of passion; 'I will thrust this letter down thy false throat with my sword unless thou declarest the whole of this plot.'

" 'I swear by Heaven,' cried I, 'that I am wholly ignorant. I know not even what

what plot you are hinting at. Is that the letter you received, my lord, from the stranger before the altar ?’

“ This question was ill-timed. His eye shot fire. A sudden resolution seemed to pass his mind, and he replied with a forced calmness—‘ Gonzalez, thou wilt have leisure to repent provoking my feelings thus.’

“ He turned away, and left me to muse upon his behaviour, which appeared compounded of contradiction. If I could but gain a sight of that letter, thought I, my doubts would be removed. This thought became stronger as I indulged in it; and when I learned the next day that he was going to carry his daughter Almira to a convent in Madrid, I resolved in his absence to gratify my curiosity. I confess that by so doing I trespassed upon my duty, but curiosity was too powerful when so stimulated, and I could not in my own mind believe that Padilla had no other motive for confining Almira than discovering her in the garden with your servant.

“ How to accomplish the design I had formed was the next object, and an object that puzzled me; for it was not to be supposed a letter of such consequence would be carelessly laid: and indeed it was most likely he would carry it about his person, in which case my researches would be useless. This, after much search, I concluded to be the fact, as I could find no traces of it in any of the open cabinets, and my honour did not permit me to be guilty of breaking open a lock. Thus I was obliged to suspend my curiosity till Padilla should return, and I endeavoured to amuse the melancholy Virginia, indulged in the absence of her sister. She frequently paid visits to the little temple in the garden, and she seemed every time so sad, that I pitied her from my heart, but had no relief to give.

“ After an absence of about a week, Don Padilla returned. His countenance was disguised in forced smiles, and he sought to be for ever in the company of Virginia.

So

So much and so sudden complacency raised in my mind suspicions of I knew not what, which his vague discourses on consanguinity did not tend to remove. I knew him to be a man capable of the most infamous proceedings, and I knew not how far his disappointments with several ladies, and his desire of an heir, might carry him."

"Surely," cried the Marquis, "you are prompting your fancy, Gonzalez, to blacken a man already sufficiently detestable."

Gonzalez shook his head, and continued. "You know not this man, Senor. Report has said things of his youth, which it is not for me to repeat. Be that as it will, I resolved to watch his steps, and in the most delicate manner to caution my young lady against those little familiarities he, as her father, had some claim to exact.

"One night, as I lay between sleeping and waking, I fancied I heard a person walking along the passage, and it being beyond the hour when all the castle should have been still, I called aloud to know who

was there; but no one returned an answer, and I arose to satisfy myself who this midnight Rambler might be.

" I threw on my great watching cloak, and taking a light, went cautiously along the passage, and soon perceived a person walking before me in the dark. I called again, and, as before, received no answer. This evident desire of shunning me raised my courage to pursue. The person was without any cloathing but a loose night-gown, and as I drew near I perceived that he made motions in the air with his arms, muttering words which I did not distinctly hear.

" I approached, and perceived to my no little terror that it was Don Padilla himself, but he took no notice of me, appearing like a man delirious. He drew near the stairs leading to the eastern wing of the castle, and taking a key from his bosom opened the door, turning round, as if to look along the avenue that none might follow. It was then for the first time I saw
his

his countenance ; it was pale and wan. His eyes were open, but fixed, and I was astonished he did not remark me though I carried a light, and he proceeded in the dark.

“ I should have returned in affright, but I remarked that he had no weapons, and my curiosity was raised to the extreme by the strangeness of the incident. As I became certain that he was delirious, or that he walked in his sleep, I followed him with a resolution, at which I have since shuddered, till he entered the large gothic hall.

“ He advanced towards the long table with the same facility in the dark as though the hall had been lighted, and seating himself in a chair, he pronounced several sentences I did not understand, and which I endeavoured to hear by drawing nearer along the hangings. He started suddenly up, as he had done on the night of his second marriage when the spectre entered.

“ ‘ Art thou there ? ’ cried he, earnestly gazing with a glassy eye. ‘ What would’st thou have, thou unreal image of the dead ?

Do’st

Do'st thou ask her? Seek her in the ocean.
 Yet they say she lives. Thou canst not
 live.—No, no, thou art dead; and yet
 my coward soul would fear thee.—Ha!
 wounds—one, two, three—bleeding too.—
 But 'tis over, the deed is done, and I'm a
 wretch indeed.—Why comest thou—Yes,
 I know, to torment me. But I am a man.
 —Ha! What is that, a dagger? Mine too;
 yet did not I do it. No, thou canst not say
 that. Sleep, sleep perturbed spirit, sleep
 thee in peace. I will meet thee at another
 time. Now my soul is weary of watching.'

"Don Padilla moved some paces back-
 wards with one hand extended forward, as
 if to defend himself, his countenance
 strangely agitated, and his eyes staring
 wildly. 'Follow me not!' cried he. 'Ah!
 Blood! Blood! Thy stains will not wear
 out.—What would'st thou?—Dost thou ask
 to know if yet she lives?—Better, oh better
 hadst thou lived to know it. But when a
 deed is done, then would folly repent, and
 coward souls sink from the action. But I

have known crimes of older date, crimes of as deep a die.—(He paused, and folding his arms, bent his eyes upon the ground, still speaking in his sleep.)—Yes, I have known such things as might indeed affright the slumbering dead. Were all the injured to rise—were the black grave to vomit up all its grisly skeletons, then would the earth witness such a scene as the sun would blush at. Do all the murdered rise again? No—Then would legioned spectres traverse o'er the bleeding fields. Yet 'tis most strange—yet it is true; these aching eyes have seen him.—(Don Padilla gazed round the hall.)—He is not here; methought I saw him but a short while since, and now he is gone; perhaps to revel with the dead; or, shivering, creep with cold, unfleshy phantoms, to the grave.'

"These wild and disordered speeches told me too well that the guilty mind of Padilla did not enjoy tranquillity. I know not how to explain the words, *She lives*, unless they had reference to the letter he
had

had received from the stranger, and I more than ever desired to examine it.

“Don Padilla seemed more quiet after this speech. He walked slowly back, as he had entered, and I had some difficulty to pass without touching him at the outer door, which he locked with the same regularity as if he had been perfectly awake. I followed him to the door of his own chamber, where a lamp was constantly burning. He entered, and seated himself upon a sofa. I looked into the room with caution, fearing that having had his ramble, he might wake, and punish me for my curiosity. On a writing-desk lay a letter half folded. My eager eye immediately caught the object, and my fancy persuaded me it was the letter I so much desired to see.

“I trembled with fear and impatience, and, advancing on tiptoe, I grasped the prize. I held it to the lamp, and read these words:—*Lady Zidana, your injured wife, yet lives.*—My eye had not glanced beyond the first line, before Don Padilla
awaking

awaking suddenly, started up at seeing me before him, and grasping me by the throat, cried out :

“ ‘ Ha! Villain! I have detected you then at last. Is it thus you dare creep to my chamber in the hour of midnight? What was thy purpose, wretch? Didst thou come to murder me?—What! dar’st thou peruse my papers too? Thy curiosity shall be rewarded; but thou shalt keep the secret thou hast thus gained.’

“ I attempted in vain to offer an excuse: indeed I was so self-convicted that I had no excuse to bring. My words expired in broken sentences, and I could say nothing clear but that I had no evil intention.

“ ‘ Thou art a bad sophist,’ said he contemptuously. ‘ I know thy crimes; but this is proof. Thou canst not make me discredit my senses. It is now midnight—I awake, and find thee reading my letters, traiterously breaking that sacred duty a servant owes his lord.’ He seized his sword, and I expected instant death; but yet I had
some

some little hope from the coolness of his manner. He took down the lamp. 'Follow me, my trusty Gonzalez,' said he, 'thy services have been long and great.'

" 'Therefore, my lord,' said I, 'this error should claim some pity: for on my knees I protest, and I take Heaven to witness, it was almost involuntary.'

" 'Rise, dotard,' cried he in a fierce voice, 'you plead too late. Follow me, and be silent.'

" I did not dare disobey, though I expected that I was walking to my own execution, and would have lingered in the passage, but his gathering frowns obliged me to move on. In this melancholy situation he conducted me into the eastern wing of the building by a door on the ground floor, and passed through several dark and dreary passages, which struck my soul with new apprehensions, perhaps as fearful as the reality I expected.

" He paused at the end of a long passage, and opened a large iron door, which being
painted

painted the colour of the wall, I had never seen before. It opened on a dark and frightful descent, which I had no doubt led into the dungeons under the castle, where, in former time, prisoners had been confined.

“ ‘ We shall not have many witnesses here,’ said he, pointing down the stairs: ‘ do me the favour to advance.’ ”

“ I stood still, and a rush of wind sighed along the passage, grating the iron door on its rusty hinges. He advanced before, and commanding me to follow, began to descend.

“ The steps were slippery with mildew, and I had some difficulty to prevent my tottering feet betraying me, and plunging me at once I knew not where. The chill damps struck upon me, and the stagnate vapours dripped from the archway. About fifty paces of a winding stair brought us to the bottom. The deep darkness of the place prevented my seeing many yards before me, and the noisome air at first almost
deprived

deprived me of breath. He turned a little to the right, and forcing back a rusty bolt, opened the door of a cell, so wretched and so dark, that my soul seemed to die within me.

“ ‘Look in, Gonzalez,’ said he in a taunting tone: ‘tell me how you like this apartment. I have long thought of rewarding you, and I do not see how I can do it better than by making you master for life of a chamber in my castle.’

“ ‘Surely,’ said I, shrinking back with horror, ‘you cannot have an idea of condemning me to perish in this loathsome dungeon, inhabited by the foulest vermin. I ask it as a mercy, that you would rather plunge the sword you carry into my heart.’

“ ‘I am not a man of violence,’ returned he, earnestly looking at me, ‘else might I take your advice. I will leave you here to meditate on the things your prying curiosity has discovered.’

“ ‘My lord,’ replied I, ‘I acknowledge my guilt and my folly; but here, in this
dread

dread mansion of misery, I solemnly swear it was unintended. I call upon the wandering spirit of the unfortunate Count Fernandez, which is now perhaps roaming through these dungeons, to witness the truth of what I shall say.' I saw by his countenance that I had touched upon the right string: I saw that his mind was affected with supernatural dread, and that however he might attempt to conceal it, the appearance of the spectre had left upon him an impression never to be effaced.

"He stared around him ready to start at his own shade; he seemed uneasy in his situation; and though he commanded me to enter the dungeon, it was in a voice tempered by fear.—I approached the door, starting back with a violence not altogether feigned; for I was shocked at the unspeakable loathsomeness of the place.

" 'Heaven protect me! What do I see!' exclaimed I, crossing myself with fervour. 'Art thou indeed himself?—Tell me, tell me,

me, Don Padilla, if my master be really dead, or only confined in that dungeon?"

" 'Your master,' repeated he in an under voice, and with a look of the greatest horror: 'Where! What!'

" 'There, there,' cried I, pointing with my hand. 'Do you not see how he bleeds?'

" Don Padilla was too much off his guard to discover my deception; his own words, which I had heard not an hour before, served me to urge his terrors; and a loud rush of wind happening to wave the door of the dungeon, which echoed the hollow creak of the hinges, he forgot all discretion, and turning suddenly round, he hurried up the stairs without once looking to see if I followed him.

" I turned the key of the door hastily when we gained the top, and concealing it in my cloak, ran after Padilla, who had forgot every caution in his haste to gain a distance from that object, which, whether real

or

or imaginary, is ever present to his fancy, and I have no doubt embitters every moment of his life.

“ I retired to my chamber, resolved as soon as the morning dawned to quit the castle, and seek some place of safety. Don Padilla, perhaps, suspected my design. He sent for me when I was making some little arrangements.

“ ‘ Come hither, Gonzalez,’ said he, in a voice where pride struggled with the remains of fear ; ‘ you know how necessary it is that the privacy of a superior, or indeed of any individual, should be sacred : you will not wonder then that I was transported almost beyond the bounds of reason at so flagrant a breach of honour in one I had so much dependence upon, especially when you remember that you have not guarded your lips on all occasions with that discretion I had expected, and agreeable to the oath I once swore on a particular event. I am willing, however, even now to forgive you, and to reinstate you, for
the

the sake of your former mistress: but as you value your own peace and mine, be more discreet in future.'

" I retired in my mind unresolved ; all my former fears for the Lady Virginia arose afresh, and I fancied that none but myself would have power to save her in case of danger. This reason determined me to remain some time longer in the castle, and I must confess my fears every day became stronger. Virginia was without suspicion, because she was innocence itself; but I by no means liked the eye of Padilla when in her presence, it spoke to me too plainly the villany of his heart.

" I pass over many unpleasing observations I made to an incident, which confirmed all my suspicions. I had been much fatigued during the day overlooking some stores of Italian preserves, and had fallen asleep in the room where they were kept, and which was some distance from my own.

" When I awoke, I was surprised to find
it

it night, and the moon shining clear through the windows. I started up, and being well acquainted with the way, ventured along the galleries in the dark. I had to pass the rooms belonging to the ladies, and as I advanced through the galleries, I was startled with the appearance of a man coming from the other end with a lamp in his hand. I saw at once it was Don Padilla, and I fancied he was taking another nocturnal ramble in his sleep. I stood still, watching his advance, but I soon perceived by his cautious motion, every moment pausing to listen, that he was not now insensible to his actions, and these signs of fear were no indications of good. He advanced about half way along the gallery, and paused at the outer door of Virginia's apartments. He laid his hand upon the lock to open it, looking round him, no doubt, with guilty apprehension.

“ ‘Monster,’ thought I, ‘can no tie, however sacred, restrain thee.’ I considered a moment how I should act without

bringing upon myself destruction. I knew well the effects of fear upon his coward soul, and I groaned aloud.—He instantly shrunk back, and stood for a moment to listen. I repeated the expedient in a deeper tone, and being certain he could not see me, I uttered in a screaming voice the word ‘Beware.’ It had a magical effect. He was too much struck with fear to inquire whence the words proceeded, immediately returning to his chamber.

“ It required in me the greatest delicacy to remove the veil from the eyes of Virginia. It was a task for which I was not fitted, and which I knew not how to undertake. I wrote a note in a disguised hand, warning her to beware of some dreadful calamity from a quarter that she least suspected. In it I urged her to fly from the castle, and join her sister at Madrid, and signed the note with the name of her mother. I took an opportunity of placing it in a way that it should appear as mysterious as possible, and I had the satisfaction

faction to perceive that she was considerably alarmed.

“ On the second day after this, she took an opportunity, when she knew her father was taking his usual repose at noon, to request my attendance in her chamber. She there questioned me relating to her mother; and as my answers were couched in ambiguous terms, mingled with professions of service and fidelity, she with some hesitation produced the billet.

“ I pretended to be considerably surprised, particularly as the hand much resembled that of her deceased mother, and counselled her to fly to her sister by the first opportunity. ‘ Old as I am, lady,’ said I, ‘ I will attend you : a warning such as this should be regarded with reverence as from a superior intelligence, and I am grieved to say I do not think it impossible to surmise from whence the danger is to be apprehended.’

“ Her curiosity now became strong, and after much entreaty I hinted to her some-

thing of the character of Padilla, and opened her eyes to a thousand circumstances, which I myself had not opportunity to see, and which she had regarded as parental affection. I related to her the incident I had so lately witnessed: my words sunk deep upon her mind, and though she would not consent to fly, she yet dreaded to stay, and entreated that I would from time to time give her my council.

“ Thus some time longer passed away, and the increased familiarities of Padilla became too pointed to be endured; so much so indeed, that Virginia shut herself up in her chamber under pretence of illness. Don Padilla was not thus to be repulsed when his passions were once set afloat, and I expected every day that the storm would break out.

“ I was awakened not many nights after by a loud noise in the gallery. I heard the screams of a woman, and starting hastily up, opened the door, and the Lady Virginia, half dressed and half dead with terror,

ror, flew into my arms.—‘ Save me, Gonzalez,’ cried she, ‘ O my father!’

“ ‘ Where!’ demanded I: ‘ What of him.’

“ ‘ Let me never see him more,’ cried she, trembling. ‘ Take me away, any where, but let me never see him more.’

“ I knew not how to proceed. I hastened to dress, entreating she would compose herself. The voice of Don Padilla ran along the passage, but his words were so mingled with oaths and threats that I could not understand him. He entered my room in a violent fury, which was evidently raised by liquor, and I did not think myself in safety in his presence. He was dressed in a loose gown, which, trailing on the ground, impeded his steps, and gave me time to draw Virginia away by another door, which I closed behind me.

“ Don Padilla stormed like a man insane, and as we ran along the way to the back staircase, I heard the door burst open, and his steps behind us. He vowed vengeance

as he ran, and the stillness of night conveyed his execrations along the passages, and urged our flight. Virginia was too much frightened to speak, and though I carried a lamp in my hand, my surprise, and fear and perplexity was so great, that I mistook the right turning, taking the way to the eastern side of the building.

“ Virginia was so faint, and my steps were so feeble, that notwithstanding the intoxication of Don Padilla, he evidently gained upon us. The door on the ground floor of the eastern wing had been left open since the night that I had been its unwilling visitant; and without other consideration than to gain the greatest possible distance, I hurried along the first passage that presented. It terminated at the iron door which led into those loathsome dungeons, and on looking round I beheld Padilla, with a taper in one hand, and a sword in the other, at less than fifty paces behind.

“‘We have no choice, lady,’ said I:
‘one

'one of us must fall if we remain here. Let us trust in Providence, and use the only means which we have left.'

"I took the key, which I still retained, Padilla probably having not acquired sufficient courage to seek it: I opened the harsh-sounding door, and with a gentle violence forced Virginia, almost fainting, to descend, pulling the door too behind us.

"Since the night I had first been in this dreary chain of vaults, I had more than once retraced all that I had ever heard concerning them, from which I had gathered that one passage led into the great vault under the chapel, which was used as a family tomb, and the other to an useless aqueduct, that had formerly supplied the castle with water in time of siege. By either of these ways I fancied it would be possible to escape, if I could retain so much resolution and presence of mind as to support the horrors that surrounded us.

"When my dear young lady gained the bottom of the steps, she looked round her

with a glance of inquiry that shrunk back almost in despair. 'Alas!' cried she, as she leaned on my arm, 'Into what place have you led me, Gonzalez? Where does this conduct us? Do you know the way?'

"This question touched me nearly, but summoning all my courage, 'Be not af-frighted,' I replied, 'this lamp will light us. I have been before down these steps; imagination is more fearful than reality.'

"The lamp streamed faintly through the stagnate and gloomy vapours. My blood crept chilly over me as I passed the dun-geon where Don Padilla had designed to entomb me.

" 'How damp and close is this terrible place,' said Virginia. 'Never did I sup-pose that beneath so splendid a building as this magnificent castle, there were dun-geons so wretched, that the heart dies at the supposition that they could ever have been inhabited.'

" 'Not willingly I believe,' replied I; 'but who knows in early times what unfor-tunate

fortunate prisoners here sighed out their existence, or what interdicted chiefs concealed themselves from the vengeance of the victors.'

"The wind crept along the dropping and encrusted walls in a faint motion, undulating the flame of the lamp, and calling to our fancy pictures of fear. Virginia frequently started as the mournful sounds passed by, and died away in the impenetrable gloom. 'It seems to me,' said she, 'as if each of these deep cells yet retained its prisoner, whose repeated sighs pass by me, and strike upon my heart.'

"The passage now branched in opposite directions, and I paused in painful irresolution. Virginia read my disquietude, and trembled. 'Do you not know the way?' said she. 'O gracious Virgin, protect us! If we should wander here, and never find an outlet?'

"There was an accent of despair in this sentence which increased my own confusion. 'Not so, my dear lady,' I replied;

‘at worst we can but return. We will commit ourselves to the holy fairs, and I trust we shall not repent the confidence.’

“We struck down the avenue that appeared the least obscure. It was narrow and low, and I found on examination it was built of hewn stone. The stream of air was purer, breathing a freshness that assured me of an intercourse with open air, and I made no doubt but we were now in the channel of the aqueduct. My courage revived at this remark, and we followed its various windings, which appeared to us without end, for more than half a mile, as I judged from the time. At length we found the way choaked up with some fragments of the wall, which had fallen in, and we stood still struck dumb with the disappointment.

“To retrace again the tedious and dismal way was what I could not think upon without dismay, and how to remove the barrier I had no means.

“Virginia was so much overcome by this
I unforeseen

unforeseen termination of our rising hopes, that she became sick, and sat down upon the damp and broken ruins to recover the faintness that oppressed her. My mind was torn with anxiety, and I repented, when too late, the blind precipitation which had led me to explore this unknown way.

“ While I supported the almost fainting maid, I cast my eyes round through the foggy vapours that surrounded us; I examined the heap of rubbish which choaked up the way, and I fancied it possible to creep over, immediately under the centre of the arch. But then it was impossible Virginia could advance first; and while I tried the way, she must remain alone and in the dark, when probably her courage might forsake her, and she might expire with fear.

“ I explained the absolute necessity that there was for our hazarding so much, and I endeavoured to inspire her with resolution to remain alone in the dark, while I should endeavour to force an opening.

K 6

She

She was nearly sinking at my feet as I spoke. 'I am a coward,' said she, her lips pale as her cheeks. 'I believe I am dying. Bury me here, Gonzalez, in this place, that my father may never behold me again,'

" 'My best, my dearest lady,' said I, ready to sink myself with apprehension at her changing countenance, 'you alarm yourself too much. Consider this place as a common vault, and half the terror ceases; fancy it your own room, and in the dark you cannot tell the difference: half our fears are ideal, and our apprehensions groundless. I will leave you the lamp; I will undertake to seek an opening alone, and I trust that Heaven will give success to my design. If not, if I do not return to you in an hour, take the lamp, and retrace your way to the castle.'

" 'Never,' said she, 'never, could I reach it. There is no way, no retreat, and here we must die.'

" I started up with the resolution of despair.

spair. 'I will at least make an attempt,' said I, 'fortune may befriend us.' I clambered over the loose rubbish, and creeping cautiously forward for half a yard, it gradually sloped away, and I found myself entangled with roots of trees entwisted together. I put out my hands to remove them, and a smooth round substance met my touch. I traced my fingers over it, and distinguished the eyes, the nose, the mouth of an human skull. My arm was torpedoed as with a numbing palsy, and my soul for a moment was shocked to its deepest feeling: I shuddered, snatching away my hand as though a serpent had bit it. For some moments I was too agitated to form a clear judgment, when fancying that my senses might have been mistaken, I again ventured to reach out my hand, and following from the forehead with a resolution which arose from desperation, I touched the bones of the chest, one of which seemed broken, and I was then convinced I was not deceived.

So

“ So horrid an interruption confounded all my senses. I saw the impossibility of leading Virginia through this opening till the day-light should allow me to remove this fearful object, and also to cut away some of the shrubs which completely overhung and filled up the entrance.

“ I returned, and found Virginia more dead than alive; but my presence raised her drooping spirits. I prepared her for the shocking spectacle we were to pass, which she guessed might have been some unfortunate traveller; but from the situation, other suggestions arose in my mind.

“ Our lamp expired before the dawn of day shed a faint light over the fallen rubbish. The fresh air softly whispered through the interwoven foliage. I encouraged Virginia to the undertaking, and with difficulty we passed over the barrier, and forced a way through the entangled roots.

“ The purple morning streamed at a distance, and not a fleecy cloud dappled the azure vault of the heavens. The dews of
the

the night hung upon every flower and every leaf, and a deep mist rolled amongst the underwood of the forest, obscuring the view, and enveloping distance in shade. Virginia acquired fresh spirits as she breathed the balmy breath of morn, and tripped lightly along the paths, where the short grass spread a carpet figured with a thousand sparkling flowers.

“ We reached the cottage of Perez before any one was abroad, and knocking at the door, the old man received us with surprise and apprehensive curiosity. He placed before us cakes and milk, of which we partook, while he made ready two mules. On these we departed, while the first rays of the sun gilded the turrets of Montillo at a distance, and raised a canopy of vapour over the top of the dark brown forest.

“ Virginia had taken the dress of one of Perez’s daughters, and I disguised myself as a peasant, hoping in the lowness of our appearance to find that security the strongest

est arms could but partially afford. We hired a guide at the first pass: he was a merry, entertaining fellow, and his stories served to divert our attention from the dangers of the way.

“The common accidents of the road brought us at length to the banks of the Tagus; but having avoided the great road, we learnt that we yet wanted some leagues of Madrid. The lowering clouds hung black and broken over the face of the declining sun, their thin edges were bordered with purple, and the rising winds sounded the signal of approaching rain.

“On the banks of the river I perceived at a distance the roof of a rising palace, and I made no doubt we might there find shelter from the coming storm. We found the way much longer than we had at first expected, and the rain overtook us at a considerable distance. We were completely wet by the time we entered this house, which we learnt with no little satisfaction

faction belonged to you, Senor, though at first the delicacy of Virginia would have shrunk back.

“ I remarked to her that chance or Providence had evidently conducted us where we ought to have designed to go, and that now she ought not to scruple from false delicacy accepting your roof as her protection.

“ Our humble appearance did not prepossess your servants in our favour; but Raolo happening to enter the hall, quickly distinguished who we were, and in the first moments of his satisfaction and hurry to have us conducted where we could change our dropping garments, he forgot to inform you of our arrival. It was my folly planned for you a little surprise, from which I had hoped more pleasing effects: but alas! who in this world ever tasted pleasure without a mixture of pain?”

“ I thank you my friend,” said the Marquis: “ it was my over rashness and blindness that has occasioned this melancholy catastrophe.

catastrophe. I am astonished at the boldness of your escape ; but I remarked that you passed over in silence the ultimate reason of Virginia's flight. My soul is on the rack, Gonzalez. Has that monster, Don Padilla—"

"Your apprehensions hurry you too far," replied Gonzalez. "I am certain my young lady would never have lived had they been realised: but thanks be to Heaven, the virtuous seldom fail if they determine to conquer. Virginia had been alarmed by my suggestions, and the billet she had received made upon her the stronger impression as she was little acquainted with the world.

"On the night of her flight she had retired to rest, from which she was suddenly awakened by a noise which Don Padilla made in approaching her chamber: for having been free with the bottle to help his resolution, he had the less caution in his actions.

"The sight of her father at that hour,
and

and in that place, recalled all that she had reflected upon, and she started up immediately calling for help. Don Padilla, half confounded at such a reception, grasped her by the arm, commanding her to silence. It was then he explained to her his horrible intentions, mingled with oaths and threats; and as he found that she still struggled to fly, calling aloud for help, he had the brutality to grasp her by the throat, with intention to murder her. It was almost by a miracle that she disengaged his hand, and snatching up a long bed-gown, darted through the passages screaming for assistance, which it was fortunately in my power to afford."

The Marquis of Denia repeated his vows of revenge, and the narrative of the old man having broken far upon the night, he retired to rest, after inquiring the health of the wounded maid.



CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Ye Powers ! cut off his dangerous thread of life,
 Left his black sins rise higher in account
 Than hell has pains to punish.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE day arose, the noon passed away, and the evening came, on which Almira was to meet the Marquis de los Velos in the garden of the convent. Her friend Valedia employed all her powers of persuasion, and suffered not her mind to retract from the unwilling engagement.

The heavenly vision of the beatified Saphira was ever present, and if she closed her eyes in reflection, the spirit seemed beckoning her away. She beheld with regret the shades of night fall upon the dark foliage

foliage of the garden, as she musing sat upon a latticed balcony which overlooked the grounds.

"Perhaps," said she with a sigh, "this is the last time my eyes shall be open upon the declining orb of day, for to-morrow they may be closed for ever to the beams of that bright planet; then shall I be insensible to the lustre of nature, and the grateful breezes will refresh me no more."

"Why," said Valedia, tenderly taking her hand, "why do you indulge such sadness, my love? You sigh as if your heart were breaking."

"I am indeed very sad," replied Almira: "grievous thoughts intrude upon me, and I almost wish myself in Heaven."

"That," replied Valedia, "is a pious wish; but many years may it be, my dear, before it is accomplished."

"Probably," said Almira with a solemn emphasis, "probably not many hours hence. Something tells me as much: and should it so happen, Valedia, you will remember my words.

words.—There is the vesper bell—Now, my dear sister Virginia will play over the evening hymn upon her lute. I will go to the chapel, and accompany her in duty.”

Valedia was struck with the singular melancholy which entoned the voice, and threw languor over the motions of her friend; and she could not but attend her with a mixture of sadness. Almira engaged in the service with avidity; she seemed to detach her whole existence from earth, and strain after things beyond knowledge. She remained in the church some time after the conclusion of the service, till every surrounding image was cast into obscurity, and no light remained but the lamps which perpetually burnt before the altar.

“Remember, my friend,” said Almira, “what I shall now entrust to you before the feet of this holy place: and as I know not what shall be the event of this night, you will either keep silence, or speak as that shall hereafter appear. The spirit of my late young friend, whose body remains
beneath

beneath this chapel, has warned me that this night *I shall go hence*: but whether from this convent, or this world, time must determine. You will witness for me that my intentions were not ill."

Valedia, who, for the first time, had listened to so singular an event, was powerfully impressed with the same fears, and began to regret the part she herself had taken, and to wish, she knew not why, that the morning was returned. She entreated Almira to be more circumstantial in her relation, and when she had listened to the particulars, entreated that she would by no means think of attending the engagement, which seemed so combined with an unknown catastrophe.

"No," replied Almira, "I have given my word. He will be in these gardens, and his rashness and disappointment may produce some ill consequences to himself. Indeed, if the words of my deceased friend have meaning, I myself cannot avert their power."

"I have

" I have been told in the world," said Valedia, " that we often give truth to prophecy, by acting as if it were unavoidable : but I am unable to counsel ; only this I know, that if any ill ensues, I shall never have any satisfaction again."

" Now you are as superstitious as myself," said Almira with a faint smile ; " that which we do for the best we should never regret. Come, let us go to my cell, we shall be remarked."

One hour passed over the other, the nuns retired to meditation or to rest, and silence had long reigned throughout this dreary abode, when the bell of the chapel solemnly and slowly struck twelve, every vibration sounding along the building. " Come, my friend," said Almira, starting up, " that which must be done it is folly to delay, we must hasten, or the sisters, who attend midnight prayers, will detect us."

She took up the lamp which burnt before the crucifix, and taking the arm of Valedia, they softly descended the stairs, starting at the

the smallest sound, like the frightened fawn, which flies from the falling leaf as it wavers in the air. They passed along the cloisters with caution, every moment looking behind, and with some difficulty drew the bolt of the door which opened into the garden.

A cool freshness breathed around them, and their lamp scarce served to light them through the dark alleys of intertwined foliage. Their steps lightly touched the ground, and when they reached within twenty paces of the appointed place, they concealed the lamp amongst some myrtle bushes. In a few minutes they gained the bottom of the garden, where the wall entered the private and narrow streets.

They stood still a moment in silence, Almira leaning upon her friend for support, when a gentle whisper warned them of the presence of Antonio, who the next minute stood before them.

“Lovely Almira,” said he in a tremulous voice, almost out of breath with im-

VOL. II.

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patient

patient satisfaction, "this is an happiness my wishes scarcely dared aspire at. Every preparation is ready for your flight. You may this moment quit a place, where it is impossible you should ever be happy."

At the first pause he made, Almira replied. "Antonio, it is to me a severe grief that I cannot repay your friendship but by what may appear ingratitude. It is indeed impossible that I should venture beyond these walls. Heaven has willed—"

"O talk not thus!" interrupted Antonio. "It would drive me raving. I must not, will not quit you, Almira. Now is the moment to escape: this lost, and we may never meet again."

"Hear me," cried Almira; "you know not the reasons I have—"

"Let me first speak mine," said the impatient Antonio. "Valedia, why do not you plead for me?"

"She has," replied Almira. "It is from her entreaties that I have now come to tell you—"

"Say

“ Say on, my angel, and bless me with the sounds,” cried Antonio, passionately taking her hand.

“ Let me entreat you to be tranquil,” returned Almira; “ this passion does not become the solemnity and danger of this place. I was going to say that it is impossible we should ever be happy if our connection needs the subterfuges of illicit proceeding; and to say that my solemn determination is never—”

“ Hold! Hold!” exclaimed Antonio eagerly. “ Distraction! that all my hopes, which have run forward to, and hung upon this moment—But you must, by heavens you shall hear what I have to urge, before I receive so fatal a resolution. I have this day seen the Marquis of Denia: your sister Virginia has taken shelter from her father’s injustice beneath his roof. An illness, which I cannot at present explain, has reduced her nearly to death: what would be so delightful to her as to receive your at-

L 2

tendance,

tendance, and be entertained by that voice she always delighted to hear?"

"Is what you tell me absolutely true?" said Almira. "But you seek to deceive me, Marquis?"

"By the Eternal Father of Mankind I swear," cried Antonio, "that what I tell you is truth. The moments are most precious; even while we are debating, we may lose an opportunity never to be regained."

"But will Valedia accompany me to my sister?" said Almira. "Methinks it is not prudent to be known to fly in company only with a man."

"Prejudice," murmured Antonio. "It is not necessary, and might betray us. Here, wrap yourself in my cloak, and take my hat and feather, while I take your long black veil. Thus, we shall be certain to elude any surprise: for if any hardy cavalier should take me for a nun, he will chance to be roughly handled."

The

The ladies were pleased with the metamorphoses, which seemed to insure protection.

"I would it were light," said Valedia to Almira, "that I might see the prettiest cavalier my eyes ever beheld: but give me a kiss, Senor, and then away."

The half hour chimed upon the convent clock, and Almira felt a tremor creep over her limbs as she saluted her friend: for then all her fears returned. The noise of a person rushing through the bushes attracted their fearful regards. A stranger darted forward, who, through the dull obscurity, appeared clad like Antonio himself, whose hat and feather were usually set on with an air that rendered him remarkable.

"Villain," cried he with a loud voice, "now shalt thou feel the strength of my arm." As he uttered this threat, he threw himself forward upon the disguised Almira, and plunged a poniard into her bosom.

The unhappy maid sunk before the blow; the purple blood streamed over her friend.

"Thy prediction is accomplished," sighed she, as she fell backward. "It was cold—"

Her words dropped into a murmur; and Valedia, incapable of supporting her friend, sunk beneath her to the ground. Antonio for some seconds was totally deprived of sense; but vengeance rising superior to every other passion, he drew his filletto, darting after the flying murderer, who had uttered a cry of bitter anguish when the sound of Almira's voice reached his ear. He fled hastily over the wall, and descended the ladder by which Antonio had entered. The Marquis de los Velos gained the top of the wall; his long black veil twisted round his waist in the hurry of pursuit, as the assassin reached the middle of the ladder.

A man wholly enveloped in a dark cloak, with a mask upon his face, stood at the bot-

tom

tom of the ladder with a dark lantern in one hand, and a drawn sword in the other. " 'Tis the Marquis de los Velos himself," said he ; and without other words he made a lunge at the person descending, and wounded him severely with his sword. He was going to repeat his thrust, when a pistol bullet fired from a distance laid him upon the ground. The person on the ladder staggered, and would have fallen, had he not been prevented by another stranger, who had fired the pistol. At the same instant Antonio, disguised in the nun's veil, reached the ground.

" What is all this, Madam?" said the stranger who was last arrived, and who mistook Antonio for a nun. " Is this the Marquis de los Velos, who, I fear, is severely wounded?"

" Merciful father!" cried Antonio. " Who is it that speaks to me? Is it the spirit of my early friend, Fernando de Cello?"

" That is my name," said the stranger :

L 4

" but

“but tell me, who are you that speak to me with the voice of a man, and yet wear the garb of a nun?”

Antonio replied in accents choaked with grief—“Alas! I am the most wretched of men; I am Antonio de los Velos; in this disguise I have witnessed the most barbarous of murders. I beg you, Fernando, come with me into this garden; the body of Almira, your cousin, lies bleeding on the ground.”

“She is not dead then?” said the wounded man in a voice they both knew to belong to Don Padilla. “Who is this at the foot of the ladder, Fernando, that you have murdered, no doubt intending the shot for me?”

“No,” answered Fernando coolly, “thou shalt have justice, Don Padilla, an higher power than my arm hangs over thee.”

“Let my dagger drink his blood,” cried Antonio, darting at him; “’tis a poor and pitiful revenge for the ill I have received.”

“Hold,” cried Fernando, seizing him
by

by the arm, "there has been too much bloodshed already. This man who lies here, from the words he uttered, mistook Padilla for you, and it was to save your life I fired upon him."

Fernando then stooped, and holding the lantern to the face of the dead man, "I know not," said he, "where, but somewhere I have certainly seen this countenance; 'tis a countenance, once seen, not easily forgotten."

Padilla pronounced the name of Jacques, cursing his folly in adopting a disguise, which betrayed him to the over-zealous sword of his own creature, who had that day received a note, ordering his attendance at this spot, where he had not arrived till Padilla had entered the garden by the ladder Antonio had placed against the wall.

"This is a most singular group of circumstances," said Fernando, "and evidently conducted by a power superior to ourselves. Follow me, Antonio, into the

L 5

garden:

garden: the unfortunate Almira must not remain there."

Antonio attended Fernando more dead than alive; indeed he scarcely knew what was passing before him, his mind being so overcome with the magnitude of the misfortune he had suffered, and the strange combination of incidents. He mounted the ladder—the wounded Padilla sat groaning upon the pavement.

Fernando advanced first, with the lantern in his hand; Valedia lay insensible upon the ground beneath the body of her friend, but so covered with blood, that they feared she had also been killed.

Antonio was unable to afford any assistance; he stood as if fixed to the spot by some powerful spell, while Fernando attempted to remove the body of Almira from the arms of Valedia. He placed his hand upon her cheek, and fancied that it retained some warmth. Enraptured with the possibility of yet saving her, he cried

out—"She lives! Antonio, lend your assistance."

Fernando raised her in his arms. The pulsation of her heart was faintly perceptible; a deep sigh breathed from the bottom of her breast; she stretched out her limbs with a slight convulsive motion, and at that instant the bell of the convent tolled one.

"It is all over," said Fernando. "Poor Almira, short has been thy existence. Who is that other lady, Antonio? Let us at least save one life."

"I fear she is dead," replied Antonio in accents of grief. "I am the unfortunate cause of this wretched tragedy."

Fernando found it was in vain to desire him to act with consistency: he gently laid the body of Almira upon the ground, and raising her friend in his arms, discovered evident signs of life; and by degrees, as he chafed her temples, she uttered half sentences of indistinct meaning. At last she opened her eyes. "Where am I?" said

she. "Almira, what does all this mean? Ah! I remember; O wretched me!"

Again she closed her eyes, and relapsed into insensibility. Fernando was distressed. Concerns of great consequence required him at another part of Madrid; it was by accident he had been entangled in this strange adventure, out of which he knew not how to extricate himself. A thousand expedients passed rapidly through his mind, but these were interrupted by a confused noise in the street, and a glare of torches, which spread a light above the high walls of the convent. He had not time to conjecture what new incident had occurred, before he perceived two officers of the Holy Inquisition mounted on the wall, and descending into the garden, followed by several more bearing torches.

"You are prisoners of the Holy Office," cried one of the foremost. "I command you to surrender. What is the meaning of this outrage and sacrilege in the garden of Dominican Nuns?"

"Sir,"

“ Sir,” replied Fernando, while he supported Valedia, “ I am almost as ignorant as yourself. It is not half an hour since I was passing this street, having in fact arrived in Madrid after the gates were shut. I learnt from this nobleman, whom you see wrapped in a nun’s veil, that a lady had been murdered in these gardens by her own father, Don Padilla, and I ventured over those sacred boundaries to see if I could possibly afford assistance. Your detention of me will be of the most serious consequences to myself, and cannot be of any advantage to you.”

“ Is not your name Fernando de Coello?” said the officer, who remarked his military dress. “ I believe your story, as I was myself at the guard-house when you were admitted with his Majesty’s passport.—You had a lady in your company, a foreigner?”

“ I had so,” returned Fernando; “ she is a person of distinction, and being in a strange country will be grievously alarmed at my absence. On the word of a gentleman

man and a soldier you may depend on my appearing to your first summons."

"That is a very unnecessary assurance," said the officer, "our office is never disobeyed. Is that lady you support living or dead?"

"Living, I believe, but extremely low."

"Deliver her to us, she must be carried to our tribunal. A transaction like this in the gardens of the Dominican Nuns must be strictly examined."

Fernando knew how useless it would be to remonstrate. He feared lest caprice might incline them to detain him also; and though he felt something like shame in quitting Antonio, he knew also that if he could be of any service it must be on the outside of those walls, where the rich and the poor were alike treated with severity.

The murmur of so many voices, and the glare of the torches, awakened Valedia to sensibility; and fixing her eyes upon Fernando, she exclaimed—"Am I alive, or am I already in the other world? Are you
Fernando

Fernando de Coello? Gracious Heaven!
Can it be himself?’

“Valedia!” cried Fernando; “my early little friend, and must I leave you in this situation—”

“Leave me,” repeated she, staring upon the dark figures which surrounded her bearing the lights: “ah! where am I? Speak to me, Fernando—Who are these?”

Her terror was again too much for her weakened nerves: and however the breast of Fernando was torn by the impossibility of administering relief, he yet lamented that he must leave to the rough hands of men inured to human misery, a young lady in so much distress.

During the whole of this scene Antonio uttered nothing but lamentations for the death of Almira, and vows of vengeance upon Padilla. He seemed wholly unconcerned at what was passing, and suffered himself to be led prisoner without the smallest resistance. The whole party quitted the gardens, and descended into the street,
where

where the furious Don Padilla, notwithstanding his wound, struggled to release himself from the men who held him, cursing alternately the accident, the Inquisition, and himself.

Fernando having delivered his lovely burden to one of the officials, and embraced his friend, whom he entreated to act with a little more fortitude, was departing, which Don Padilla observing, cried aloud :

“Do you suffer that man to escape? I charge him with having attempted my life; it is by his sword I am wounded.”

The ready officers immediately seized Fernando, who trembled at the danger he ran of being detained, which he would willingly have resisted at the hazard of his life, but that he knew it was morally useless. Fernando had seen too much real danger to be confused at this unpleasant incident.

“I will convince this man,” said he, pointing to Don Padilla, “of his error.” Then drawing his sabre, which glittered by
the

the light of the torches as he moved it rapidly before the eyes of the officers, " I may venture to say," continued he, " that had I thrust this instrument of my country's vengeance through the body of that wretch, he had before this closed his eyes in everlasting darkness."

The archers were convinced, and Don Padilla, half abashed, endeavoured to accuse him of the murder of Jacques: but the archers not giving credit to his assertion, which Fernando treated with lightness, he was suffered to escape, watching from a distance the sad procession, which the time of the night and the flames of the torches rendered beyond description gloomy.

Fernando having extricated himself from this unpleasant situation, hurried to the inn where he had taken lodgings on his arrival that night at Madrid. His servant had waited for him a long time with anxiety, fearing, from the lateness of the hour, that some accident had happened.

A young

A young lady flew into his arms, and expressed her satisfaction at his return. "I feared," said she, "that you had fallen into danger, and my heart trembled lest I should never see you more."

"Now then, my Selima," said Fernando, pressing her to his breast, "let the little flutterer rest: for I am here in safety."

"Holy Prophet!" exclaimed the lady, starting back; "but there is blood upon your clothes: you are wounded, and conceal it."

"I am not indeed," replied he; "be satisfied, my Selima, it was a trifling encounter, very common in this country."

"Then shall I wish myself away from Spain: but if you are not wounded, whence is this blood?"

Fernando found the necessity of an explanation. "I was returning from the palace of the Marquis of Denia, who, I found, was not in town, when this accident happened." He then related the adventures of the night, and, after some preparation,

ration, informed her that it was his cousin Almira who was killed, and that her sister Virginia lay ill at the country house of the Marquis of Denia : “ to which place,” said he, “ we will depart early in the morning. You will there find a secure retreat ; you can take charge of Virginia, while myself and the Marquis return to Madrid, to exert our endeavours in behalf of our friends. It is a rude welcome you receive, my Selima, on your arrival in the capital of my native country.”

“ Fate,” replied Selima, “ is busy with us, and we must attend its decrees. I am eager to embrace Virginia, in whom I am certain to find a sister ; and had Almira lived to receive me, my fortune would have been complete.”

It was late, and giving orders for a chaise in the morning, they retired to rest.

C H A P. VIII.

The worlde ys darke wythe nyghte ; the wyndes are
fyllle ;

Fayntelle the mone her palyde lyghte makes glencie ;
The risen sprytes the fylente church-yarde fyllle,
With ouphant fairyes joyning ynn the dreame,
The forreste sheenethe wythe the sylver teme.

CHATTERTON.

IN the morning Fernando hastened to depart, fearing that an order from the Inquisition might arrest him before he should be upon the road, as he could have little doubt but Don Padilla would denounce him as the destroyer of Jacques, though that destruction saved his own life, from the mistaken fury of his too faithful instrument.

Selima dressed herself in the eastern stile,
over

over which she tied the Spanish travelling cloak, that they might escape the gaze of vulgar curiosity. About nine they proceeded on the road, and Fernando was delighted with the remarks of his charming companion.

Selima took no small pleasure in the beautiful scenery that adorned the roads which they passed. Groves of olives, limes, and chestnut shaded the sides of the way; the eye was delighted with the golden fields of saffron, mingling with others of corn; and Selima compared (in the language of her own country) the pastures covered with flocks of sheep to rows of pearl upon a mantle of green velvet.

Thus they rode forward, till the way wound along the banks of the Tagus. On one side the waves reflected the trees which hung over the banks, while on the other the groves deepened into confusion, and spread into a forest. A thousand insects circled in the sun-beams, or skimmed the curling waves; and the fishes in wanton

ton sport shewed their flashing sides above the less glittering waters.

Amused by the harmony of romantic scenery, and looking forward to the meeting of friendship and affection, they seemed scarcely to have left Madrid, when the red rays of the declining sun warned them of the evening's approach. They rode along the banks of the river by a way, where the impending boughs almost touched the chaise. A sudden plunge into the water roused them from their pleasing reflections by an emotion of alarm; and stopping the chaise, Fernando alighted, and hurried to the spot to give his assistance, if assistance should be wanted.

A female was struggling in the waves: her hair and her garments floated loose upon the waters, and Fernando could not decide from any appearance near him whether she had fallen in by accident, or thrown herself in by design. He did not wait to consider, the danger was pressing, and he had no claim but that of humanity to listen to.

to. He tore off his upper garments, and unloosing his sword, instantly plunged into the water ; and being skilled in all the exercises which become a soldier and a man, he bore her triumphantly to shore before his servant had had time to dismount, and lend him assistance.

Selima had quitted the chaise, and when her anxiety for the danger of Fernando ceased, she had leisure to make observations. The wretched object of their attention was black with suppressed circulation. Selima unloosed her garments, that the returning pulsations might freely beat. Around her neck was suspended by a curious chain of twisted gold and silver wire a portrait of a nobleman.

Fernando examined the countenance, which was fine, with an air of grandeur in the whole expression. " Surely," said he, " I have seen a person something resembling this, but where I know not." In turning the portrait he discovered a secret spring, which he touched, and on opening it,

it, a ring set round with emeralds fell upon the ground. The words *Tavarro Padilla* in gold letters caught his eye. "Is it possible," said he, "this can ever have been the picture of Don Padilla? How much has time and familiarity with vice changed him?"

Selima took up the ring, which contained also the initials of Padilla; and the stranger coming fast to her senses, they replaced the portrait. After many long-drawn sighs, she raised her eyes upon the face of Selima, which was bent over her in the attitude of benevolence relieving misery. She seemed to shudder, and sink within herself. "Great Heaven!" muttered she, "is it possible?"

"What possible?" said Fernando. "What do you wish?"

"Nothing," answered she faintly; "only leave me here to die. I am an unworthy wretch, and the light of the sun will blast me."

"She is delirious," said Selima. "We will take her into our carriage, she will perhaps

perhaps live till we reach the Marquis of Denia's."

"Oh! No, no, no," cried she, struggling to rise: "let me not see his face. He will kill me with a frown. I beseech you, let me die here."

Her head rested upon her knees, and her flowing tresses, dropping with water, hung down covering her face: her whole appearance was deplorable in extreme, and Selima wiped away the tear of commiseration. After much entreaty, she consented to their disposal; and being drenched with wet, the servants rode forward at a rapid rate. All the arguments of Fernando could not prevail on this unhappy creature to enter the Marquis's presence; and when they reached the palace, she was delivered over to the care of Raolo.

The Marquis of Denia was wholly ignorant of the transactions of the last night at Madrid, the most part of which he had past in attending to the narrative of old Gonzalez, and the morning found Virginia

so much better, that he looked forward once more to happiness.

He had slightly learned from Antonio that he had a prospect of certainly liberating Almira, and he had offered his house as a safe protection from the first resentment of Padilla. These thoughts were uppermost while he watched by the side of the sleeping Virginia; and when the servant announced the arrival of a gentleman and lady, who particularly requested his presence alone, his fancy ran forward to Antonio and Almira.

He left Virginia to the care of the maternal housekeeper, and framing a compliment to his friend on his success, and to Almira on her courage, he followed the servant to the door of the sitting chamber, which he opened himself, bidding the servant retire.

The Marquis when he entered stood still, confounded with inexpressible surprise. Had a spirit from the dead arisen before him, or fire darted from beneath his feet,
his

his astonishment could not have been greater. He beheld his dearest friend and former companion, whom he had long believed dead, standing in the middle of the room, holding the hand of a young lady, whose features instantly reminded him of the portrait they had found the night when the Moorish ruins sheltered them from the storm.

The lady was dressed in a style of great magnificence, presenting a figure irresistibly beautiful. Her drawers were of the finest white satin, touched with silver edging; her slippers were of green morocco, and round her waist was an elegant Persian sash, fastened with a pearl clasp: her upper vestment was of green satin, sprinkled with golden stars, and over her hair a thin caul of green net-work and crescents of gold was fastened in the manner of her country. Her complexion was a clear mixture of roses and lilies, and her bright eyes were of the darkest hue, sparkling beneath arches that were tinged with alcohol. Her mouth

M 2

was

was dimpled with an arch smile, and the *contour* of her whole face and figure was the finish of feminine loveliness, mingled with dignity and grace.

Fernando enjoyed the surprise of the Marquis, gazing alternately from him to Selima. "Yes," cried he, rushing into his arms, "I guess your thoughts, my dear friend. This is the lady whom I loved before I saw. Nothing less than miracles could have brought us together. Now, my dear friend, we shall be happy: but how is Virginia?"

"She is recovering, I hope," replied the Marquis: "but we will not damp the first moments of our meeting." Then taking the hand of Selima, "this lady," said he, "will be an honour to our country, and a blessing to her friends. You are a fortunate fellow, Fernando, and it is well my heart is already engaged."

A conversation the most agreeable ensued, which continued till Fernando observing that his clothes were wet, begged the

the Marquis to lend him a change. "Meanwhile," said he, "Selima will repeat to you a little adventure we met upon the road." The Marquis attended to the narrative with impatience and surprise. "Wretched creature," said he, "can her crimes have driven her to this last resource of despair and guilt. I scarce think myself safe beneath the same roof."

"She was very unwilling to come here," replied Selima: "your name terrified her into agony. You know then who she is?"

"No," answered the Marquis. "I suspect that I know her from your description. It was mistaking her that I wounded Virginia. That is a charming portrait you wear, Selima: but it is not that of Fernando."

Selima smiled. "Your suspicion," said she, "deserves to be held in ignorance, and I do not know that I ought to make this discovery to you in the absence of Fernando; but if he is displeased, he must

impute it to the fault of our sex. This is the picture of Count Ferendez."

The Marquis changed colour at mention of a name which had been united with so much of supernatural incident; that it recalled images of the most unpleasant nature to his mind.

"You are amazed," continued Selima, "but your surprise will not decrease when I tell you I am his daughter by the Lady Zidana."

"Is it true without a miracle," cried the Marquis, "you are that infant daughter whom we supposed murdered by a barbarous policy. You are the sister of Almira, and the heiress of the Grenada estates, which have been so many years unclaimed. Don Padilla will not be overjoyed at your unexpected return."

"It will be unexpected I believe by him," answered Selima; "but my whole life has hitherto been a chain of surprise, nor have I experienced the least since my arrival in Madrid." There

There was so much of grief in the last sentence, that the Marquis was at a loss to account for it. "I hope," said he, "you have not met with any thing unpleasant since you arrived. I am certain your sister Almira, if the restriction of a convent had permitted, would have rejoiced in clasping you to her bosom. Good heavens! Selima, you weep—sure no accident has happened?"

Selima broke into tears unable to reply. "Let me comfort you," cried the Marquis, after a moment's pause: "I now guess, you have been at the Convent of Dominicans, and you have not found your sister: but that need not alarm you. My friend, the Marquis de los Velos, with whom I expect to see her every hour, is a nobleman of honour."

"This is torture insufferable," cried Selima, giving way to a flood of tears: "O Marquis, do not kill me by speaking thus. Alas! you have not then heard.—You know not.—But my sister is dead."

M 4

"Dead!"

"Dead!" exclaimed the Marquis, starting from his seat, trembling, yet doubting the reality of what he heard: "you must be under some terrible mistake."

"O that I were," replied Selima, as Fernando entered the room.

"I am shocked," said the Marquis, while the colour forsook his cheeks: "but is it true, Fernando? Is Antonio killed?—Tell me the extent of what I tremble to hear."

"He lives," replied Fernando, "but he is a prisoner in the Inquisition. Our unhappy sister has too surely fallen, and that by the hands of her father."

"How long shall justice sleep?" cried the Marquis with a gloomy frown.

"On this subject be silent," returned Fernando, laying his hand on Albert's arm, "the thunder at this moment rolls over his head.—Now, my dear friend, introduce us to Virginia."

"It must be without detail then," replied the Marquis: "her wound is yet unclosed,

unclosed, and agitation may retard her cure."

"It is most singular," observed Fernando, "that these sisters should all of them, within the space of forty-eight hours, at a distance wide of each other, and in situations that might have insured safety, run the hazard of a violent death. It seems as if fate were drawing to a climax. My Selima here did not escape the malign influence of the stars that hang over the house of Padilla; but being less connected, has escaped unhurt. We were hurrying along the road from Toledo, and as the night came on I was apprehensive we might incur hazard as we approached the metropolis. To prepare for which, I drew my pistols from a cloak bag, one of the strings of which catching the lock, the pistol fired, and the bullet went through Selima's veil"

"You have often spoken to me," said Selima, smiling through her tears, "on the folly of believing so much as we do in fatality; but tell me by what other name you

would call these incidents which have brought three sisters so near to death by the hands of their lovers : you had nearly destroyed me in preparing to defend me, the Marquis has wounded Virginia in a blind haste, and Antonio has caused the death of Almira, by disguising her in his own habit. Let me now visit my only sister, and I will endeavour to supply the loss she has received in Almira."

The Marquis desired that she would defer that duty till the morning, as he feared the surprise might be too much for Virginia ; at the same time he observed that her own fatigue called upon her to take repose. " As to Fernando and myself," said he, " we will spend the hours together ; we have much to discourse upon, and it is no new thing for us to pass the night in watching." He then called Raolo, and gave him in charge to prevent the escape of the wretched woman, whose name Raolo informed him was Berenice, and at the same time to supply her with every refreshment.

Selima, at the persuasion of the Marquis, consented to defer her intended introduction till the morning, provided she might be allowed the satisfaction of taking a look at her while she slept.

When Fernando and Albert were left alone, a thousand inquiries and congratulations took place, and it was not till after Fernando had related his adventures on the preceding night at Madrid, that the Marquis could attend patiently to the narrative of his adventures since their separation on the wild mountains of Sierra Morena.



The Adventures of FERNANDO DE COELLO.

ON the day that we parted company on the tops of the mountains I resolved, as I travelled on the way, immediately to re-

M 6

turn

turn to the environs of Montillo, to examine that spot by the banks of the river which had been so wonderfully pointed out to your memory. My mind was too busy with its own reflections to regard the road, and I struck down one which certainly would not have been an object of choice ; it was so dreary and so dangerous, that I was roused from my reflections to attend to my safety. It carried us, however, some miles nearer to Tolosa, but wholly wide of the Castle of Montillo.

The design I had entertained I was now obliged to postpone, receiving on my arrival at head-quarters an order to march my troops immediately back to Grenada, where I should receive further information. I was surprised at this order, which I was not the less obliged to obey, and again I had the satisfaction of traversing that delightful province. I should have taken a more minute survey of the Moorish ruin had we remained but one day in the city ; but the troops that were to join us

were already assembled, and we continued our route to Malaga through a country of romance. Vines and orange groves spread over the hills, and the remains of Moorish and gothic antiquity would have afforded me perpetual amusement, had not the rapidity of our march precluded delay.

At Malaga I learnt that our commands were to proceed to Ceuta, in Barbary, which place had been so long besieged by the Moors, that their camp had arisen into a village, and the desert for some miles round into a garden. Their preparations of late had been more vigorous, and it was judged necessary to supply the garrison with an immediate reinforcement. My troops were quartered at the old castle, and two days were allowed us to provide necessaries for our absence and change of country.

In the evening of our arrival, the first object of my attention was to write to you an account of my situation, but this letter never reached you from a singular accident.

dent. The subject which ever preyed upon my mind, and engaged all my thoughts, distasted to me the common recreations of life. Whether it were fatality, or a species of madness, I know not ; but the impression of that lovely portrait was never to be effaced from my imagination, and had it been a real object I could not have esteemed it more.

I frequently rambled into some lone spot, far from my companions, that I might gaze upon my secret treasure. I had written my letter nearly to the bottom when I broke off, to enjoy the beauties of a cloudless sky ; and having unsettled my fancy by reflections on the folly of my passion, I resolved to take a walk along the rocky shores of the Mediterranean, proposing at my return to finish my epistle, and give you an account of a ramble you would have been happy in sharing.

Quitting the castle, I struck along the lonely borders of the sea, wholly employed in a long train of reflection. The regular
dashing

dashing of the gentle waves upon the sands and the rocks, had a sound so melancholy, that reveries of the profoundest nature crept over me.

I wandered forward till the city, its inhabitants, and its confusion were wholly lost, and solemn silence hung upon the night. A light gale at intervals sighed along the beach, but the bosom of the waves slept in peace, and the eye wandered at large over their vast extent, bounded only by imagination. I sat down upon a fragment of rock facing the east, the evening star sparkled in the clear firmament, and a pale semicircular arch, drawn from the surface of the ocean, proclaimed the rising moon.

I observed the slow advancement of its motion, till the first ray of its silver edge struck upon the surface of the water, and danced, as it were, over the gentle quivering of the waves. Every breath of air seemed suspended in silence, and the sublimity of light and shade raised the mind
into

into regions of its own creation. As the moon arose, the distant objects reflected its beams, and a few vessels were seen to sleep upon the waters, like sea-fowl bathing their plumes in the refreshing element.

I leaned my head upon my hands to contemplate the wonders of creation, and lose myself in its pleasures. A sweet strain of rising harmony stole upon my ear. I listened, and the melody seemed to increase from a distance in soft and airy tones, unbroken by any zephyr that moved.

I listened in delight and astonishment, for no sounds like these had ever touched my soul; they seemed to proceed over the waters, but the minstrels were invisible; and I fancied the nymphs of the ocean, or the syrens of the early ages, were gathering around me. The shores of this ocean are famed in poetry and romance as the choice of superior spirits, and I gave way to the delightful delusion which enraptured my mind. I was, if I may so express myself, entranced with an unknown pleasure,
when

when the sounds swelled into a full chorus,
mingled with harmonious voices; and I
could distinguish these words, sung with an
air so altogether different from human
composition, that my memory could not
forget them.

Gallant and gaily
On the waves riding,
Spirits of Ocean
Come to my call:
Nightly and daily
Thro' the deep gliding,
Swift as in motion
Ye circle this ball.
Warble a chorus,
Passing before us,
Skimming the green, when the moon-beams sleep;
Hollow shells founding,
Echo rebounding,
Charms into pleasure the turbulent deep.

This was all I could clearly distinguish,
the invisible troop passing away upon the
trackless deep, and sinking by degrees, the
sounds

sounds were wholly lost in distance; leaving me wrapped in wonder, and that sort of pleasure the mind enjoys, after contemplating any object superior to itself.

It was impossible voluntarily to interrupt so pleasing a train of thought, and I had some faint hope to catch again the celestial warblings. The moon moved in majestic silence through the starry heavens, and I arose when the breezes of midnight began to steal along the darkening shore.

A distant sound of oars dipping in the water passed upon the wind, and I paused a moment to see if the vessel were visible; but a point of projecting rock hid it from my view. I began to think of making the best of my way back to Malaga, when again my curiosity was excited by the vessel turning the point, and rowing directly towards me.

By the shade in which I stood, I had the advantage of overlooking without being seen, and I remained without moving

ing under an hanging cliff. The galley brought too within a little distance of the shore, and a boat was dispatched to the land. • In a few minutes it struck upon the shore, and four men, supporting a large heavy trunk between them, advanced upon the beach. They halted within about thirty paces of where I stood, and letting their burden to the ground, three of them began to dig an hole in the sands, while the fourth wrung his hands, and lamented his ill-fortune in accents of the greatest grief, and in a language I judged to be Moorish.

My curiosity was strongly excited by this strange incident; I wished much to learn what was in the chest; but feared to move lest I should create an alarm which might be unpleasant to myself. I now examined the men and the vessel with more attention, and could no longer doubt their being Moorish cruizers: but while I debated how I should best act, they had
opened

opened a considerable pit. The chest appeared heavy, and with difficulty they let it down with ropes; while my curiosity became so strong, that I had no little struggle to listen to the suggestions of prudence.

The man I had seen bewailing himself, then threw himself prone upon the sands in an agony of distress, while the others, without once speaking or noticing his grief, continued to fill up the pit. A fusée fired from the galley alarmed them, and leaving work, they seemed attempting to persuade the mourner to accompany them; but he appeared deaf to their entreaties, motioning them away. They then seized him, and by force carried him to the boat, rowing immediately from shore, in too much haste to carry away their tools.

I waited only till they were under sail, then running to the spot, I examined it with care, and taking up a spade, began to throw up the sand, that I might satisfy myself

myself as much as possible in this strange adventure. The pit they had dug in the yielding sands was large and deep, that the sea might not carry off the chest, and I was soon beneath the level of the shore. I laboured with a strength supplied by wonder and curiosity. I did not suppose it was any species of plunder they had so carefully concealed; that, might have been carried away with facility, and would not have excited those transports of grief I had witnessed: I rather believed it the body of some person they had robbed, or a comrade killed in a fray.

With difficulty I cleared the sand from the cover of the chest. I raised the lid, for the whole was much too heavy for me to remove in that situation, and found a considerable folding of linen cloth, which filled up the chest. This I removed, and by the pale beams of the moon discovered the face of an human figure, extremely beautiful and very young. Though I had
 expected

expected to find a dead body, yet I had supposed it some elderly man; and my horror was not a little increased, on turning a fine painted shawl, which lay upon the breast, to find that this beautiful creature was a female.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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